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The Celtic church in England
after the Synod of Whitby

THIS book is a study of Celtic influence in the English kingdoms after the year 664. It is an important contribution not only to the history of Celtic Christianity, but also to English history, ecclesiastical and political, during the seventh and eighth centuries. It breaks new ground in many important directions and among other subjects throws fresh light upon: Theodore of Canterbury and his policy towards Celtic Christianity: S. Cuthbert of Lindisfarne: S. John of Beverley: The Venerable Bede and his diocesan Bishop Acca of Hexham, and the circumstances which led to the writing of *Historia Ecclesiastica*. It is the outcome of wide research and is based on a careful examination of the original sources, English, Irish, Scotch and Welch. As a work of scholarship it is indispensable to the student: as a new book on a most fascinating and important period of English history it will equally engage the interest of the general reader.

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THE CELTIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND



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THE CELTIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND

After the Synod of Whitby

BY
JOHN L. ^{ndwig} GOUGH MEISSNER M.A.

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TO THE MEMORY OF
MY FATHER



PREFACE

It is commonly supposed that the Synod of Whitby brought about the break-up of the Celtic organization and the abandonment of Celtic customs in the English kingdoms.

The year 664, however, was far from being the end of Celtic Christianity in England: Celtic influence to a large extent survived, and for a very considerable time was actually in the ascendant. Not only did many usages peculiar to the Celtic Church continue to be observed, but in Northumbria the whole peculiar monastic organization of that Church actually survived the Synod of Whitby for many years.

The present volume is an attempt to show how very real and extensive this Celtic survival was. I have tried to trace the various influences, political and ecclesiastical, which made this survival possible, and to show to what extent events in English kingdoms were influenced by the surrounding peoples of the Picts, Scots, both of Ireland and Alba, and Brito-Welch. In this connection I have endeavoured to point out the significance of the events of the year 685 and of Ecgfrid of Northumbria's various missionary adventures in the territories of his Celtic neighbours. Two names stand out with especial

prominence in this struggle against Celtic ascendancy : they are those of Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury and Bishop Acca of Hexham.

I have shown, I hope, how great is the debt which the English Church owes to that great Archbishop for his wonderful tact and wisdom in handling the thorny problem which the Celtic organization presented in the England of his day. To him is due the fact that Celtic Christianity was gradually, and on the whole peacefully, merged into an united Church of the English.

Bishop Acca's work was second only to that of Theodore's. His labours on behalf of education, and the association of Bede in this work with his diocesan, made it possible to receive in England an education at once liberal and non-Celtic—a thing hitherto well-nigh impossible.

Much of the ground covered in this volume is entirely untrodden. I have endeavoured as much as possible to avoid repeating what has already been said by others, and to focus attention on the remarkable mass of evidence of the survival of Celtic usages which, strange to say, has hitherto passed unnoticed.

In approaching the question of the gradual submergence of the peculiar Celtic forms of Christianity in the various kingdoms of the English, I am aware that I am dealing only with one side of a complicated question. The facts of this long evolution are the side, and the only side, which I have undertaken to deal with : the respective merits of the customs in dispute I have left almost entirely out of account.

The Celtic Church possessed undoubted zeal, enthusiasm, and learning, but in the sense of order

and authority it was deficient. The latter qualities were the special legacy left by the representatives of the Roman Church, such as Theodore and Acca, to the Christianity of the English.

English missionaries, trained in Ireland, to a great extent completed the evangelization of the German peoples, and it is surely not fanciful to attribute their success to the fact, that to the high enthusiasm and devotion which they had imbibed from their Celtic preceptors, they added the peculiarly English gifts of moderation and discipline.

In the numerous quotations from original documents I have in every case adopted a strictly literal translation, and in addition have given full references at the foot of each page. A Bibliography of the authorities relied upon is also appended. As regards my obligations to modern writers, I believe that they are in every case acknowledged in the foot-notes : if I have anywhere omitted to do this, I tender my sincere apologies for the oversight.

It now only remains for me to thank those who have kindly helped me during the progress of this book. And here I would especially thank the Dean of St. Patrick's for the kind interest he has taken in my work. Dr. Lawlor has not only given me the benefit of his advice and criticism, but also was kind enough to read over parts of this book in manuscript.

I would also thank my old master and friend, Professor R. M. Henry, of Queen's University, Belfast, for the great help he has given me in preparing this volume for the Press. Professor Henry has not only been so kind as to read through my translations of all the Latin passages, but also was good enough to

read through the whole work in manuscript. For all the valuable time he has bestowed upon this work, and for the invaluable help of his criticism, I now ask him to accept my most grateful thanks.

I desire to thank my friend, the Rev. D. G. Allman, for the stimulus of his continual interest and encouragement, and my wife for the help which she has so ungrudgingly afforded me in the labour of reading and correcting the proofs of this volume.

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Feast of the Transfiguration, 1928.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

It may be truly said that the history of Great Britain during the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries, and especially of those parts of it inhabited by the English race, is only just emerging from the accumulated débris of centuries. The outstanding fact during these centuries in the history of England is the great and overwhelming influence of Irish Christianity and Irish civilization.

We must carefully bear in mind that during these centuries the Irish Church was at the height of her power, her missionaries had penetrated every known quarter of the globe, and more than this, at this period of her history she was a formidable rival of the Church of Rome in the work of converting to Christianity the barbarian hordes who were pouring like a flood over the decaying Roman Empire of the West.

The fact that the English were converted to the Christian Faith by a Church whose attitude to Rome was always 'one of hostility, suspicion, and dislike,'¹

¹ As examples of this hostility we may mention the statement of Laurentius, Mellitus, and Justus, that the Irish bishop Dagan refused even to eat in the same inn with them (*Bede, H.E. Bk. II. Ch. 4*), and Aldhelm's assertion that the British priests beyond the Severn not only declined to join in any act of worship with the Saxons, but would cast

explains why almost the very names of those who brought the faith of Christ to the heathen invaders of Britain are almost unknown, even to persons of education.

The history of this period was written by writers like Bede who were opposed to Celtic influence, and it is only yesterday that English scholars have discovered that a knowledge not only of Irish sources, but also of Irish archæology, is necessary for a right understanding of the history of England during this period ; this accounts for the astonishing fact that the dismal failure of the Augustinian mission is represented as the conversion of the English race.

If we keep two facts before our minds we shall the more readily understand the tenacity of Irish Christianity in England. The first is the extreme slowness of the English conquests in Britain ; in the year 614, seventeen years after the landing of Augustine, and only twelve years after the arrival of Paulinus in Yorkshire, the district of Leeds was still British and therefore Christian ; while the kingdom of Wessex, founded about the year 519 by Cerdic, had not passed the eastern boundaries of Wilts and Dorset a hundred years later.

‘ It is also fairly certain, though the evidence is not completely trustworthy, that the last British Bishop of London fled to the west to escape the marauding heathen a few years before the arrival of Mellitus.’¹

any fragments of food left by them to the dogs and swine, and refused to use even the same dishes until thoroughly scoured with sand or cinders. On the Roman side Theodore’s *Penitential* treats all British and Irish bishops as excommunicate, and all their acts as invalid.

¹ G. F. Browne, *Conversion of the Heptarchy*, p. 133.

We therefore see that the invading English had obtained a comparatively small hold on the country, and that even as late as the arrival of the Roman mission a great part of the country still retained its Christian inhabitants. The second fact to remember is that 'the extirpation of the Christian Britons in the conquered districts was not nearly so great as has been supposed, and there is ground for believing that among the heathen conquerors were many enslaved Christian Britons.'¹

On the coast of Yorkshire about sixteen miles east of Hull stands St. Patrick's Church in the little village of Patrington, also deriving its name from the Saint; while close to Nottingham is the beautiful little Church of Nuthall, also dedicated to the same Saint. Remembering two facts: first, that the Celtic Church always dedicated its churches to the founder,² or to the founder of the monastery from which the founder of the church came; and that it was the settled policy of the Roman Church to exterminate all traces of Celtic Christianity once she got the upper hand (so much so that there is not one old dedication to St. Aidan in all the north of England), we see clearly what these dedications tell us. They are remnants of the original Celtic Christianity, and they have survived the English conquests because the Christian Faith was still kept alive by the captive

¹ G. F. Browne, *Conversion of the Heptarchy*, p. 10.

² The great importance of these dedications has been pointed out by Dr. Joseph Anderson, who, after stating the invariable rule of dedication to the founder, remarks: 'Hence these early dedications are altogether different from the later ones that superseded them. They have a historical as well as a religious significance, and on this account they fall within the province of the archæologist and the historian, and rank amongst the most valuable materials that have survived the lapse of ages.'—Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, p. 190.

Britons, and they have survived the Roman aggression for the very good reason that they bore the name of an early saint whose name would be almost unknown ; had they been dedicated to a later saint of the time of Aidan's mission they would have shared the fate of all the churches founded by the followers of that great man ; their original dedications would have been suppressed by the Roman authorities.

The original Celtic Christianity had thus a very powerful hold on the country at the time when the first Roman emissary landed in Kent, but more than this, when at last the heathen English were won for Christ their conversion was almost entirely accomplished by Celtic missionaries in communion with the Church of Ireland. It is no exaggeration to say that with the exception of Kent and Sussex the whole English race received the faith from them, and even in Sussex we know that Irish missionaries were at work before the arrival of Wilfrid.

On the other hand the Augustinian mission was ' a woeful failure ' ;¹ while it is certain that whether or not St. Ninian received his commission from the Roman See² the Christianity which ultimately took

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age of the Early English Church*, vol. i, p. xxv.

² The Roman origin of Ninian's mission has been disputed. The Whithern and Kirkmadrine crosses, however, seem almost decisive evidence in favour of a Roman origin.

It is practically certain that these crosses date from Ninian's time : they stand in the district where he worked, and the Whithern cross bears the inscription ' *Petri Apostoli.*' This inscription seems almost decisive, but the crosses agree with the other evidence. Bede (Bk. III. Ch. 4) distinctly says that Ninian was instructed at Rome, and Aildred tells us that he visited Martin on his way to Britain¹—that is, after he had been consecrated bishop. No doubt St. Martin's establishment at Tours greatly influenced Ninian, and it was this influence that ultimately triumphed.

When in later years the close connection between Ireland and Whithern began, the Celtic Christianity of the Irish Church completely over-

[¹ *Aildred Vita*, abr. in Capgr. vol. ii. ; also ed. Forbes *Historians of Scotland*.]

root in those districts where he worked was that of the Celtic Church. The members of the Augustinian mission were indeed not conspicuous for their bravery. 'The runaway Italians'¹ is the term applied to them by Bishop Forest Browne; and when we add to this the astonishing statement of Bede² that seventy years after the landing of Augustine not one of the Italian mission had troubled to learn the language of the people, we do not wonder that their mission failed so signally.

It will therefore be seen how firm was the hold obtained by the Irish Church in England in the period prior to the Synod of Whitby. During the first half of the seventh century the hold of the English on the parts of Britain conquered by them was still most precarious; during the years 633-35 the most powerful kingdom of the English, that of Northumbria, was reconquered by the Britons, 'and was actually ruled over by a Christian British king; the ancient race and Church once again covered Yorkshire to the sea-coast, and a Christian king, and a Briton, once more sat in the great fortresses of Edinburgh and Bamborough.'³ The English invaders had also to contend with another foe, the Scots, who crossing from Ireland had made settle-

whelmed whatever Roman influence Ninian may have brought with him. (See *Ninian the Apostle of the Britons and Picts*, by A. B. Scott.) The Whithorn and Kirkmadrine crosses are figured and described in Anderson's *Scotland in Early Christian Times* (second series), pp. 251-256. See also G. F. Browne, *The Church in these Islands before Augustine*, pp. 109-111.

Mr. Scott seems to be unaware of the existence of these crosses, and they seem fatal to a non-Roman origin of Ninian's mission.

¹ G. F. Browne, *Conversion of the Heptarchy*, p. 19.

² Bede, *Hist. Abbatum*, Ch. 3.

³ G. F. Browne, *Conversion of the Heptarchy*, pp. 15-16.

ments in Argyllshire, advanced southwards, and their final advance was only checked at Degsaston, near Carlisle, in 603.

In the year 664, the year of the Synod of Whitby, the Augustinian mission had not passed the borders of Kent, but all England, except Sussex, had embraced Christianity.

Augustine had tried to extract obedience from the British bishops, but had failed ; now for the second time the attempt was to be made, with what results we shall see. This time the fight was with those Irish missionaries who had been so marvellously successful in their labours.

CHAPTER II

THE SYNOD OF WHITBY AND ITS IMMEDIATE RESULTS

THE Christianity established in England by the Irish missionaries was an exact replica of that of the Irish Church, and the system of that Church, in many ways unique, was transplanted into England and took deep root in that country.

‘The organization of the Irish Church was not at this time based on diocesan episcopacy, but the ecclesiastical jurisdiction was in the hands of the abbots of the great monasteries who administered the districts subject to them, the bishops being merely members of the monastic bodies, and as such subject, even as regards their episcopal functions, to the authority of the abbot, in virtue of the vow of monastic obedience. . . . This did not imply any confusion between the spiritual functions of bishop and presbyter, or any claim on the side of the abbot-presbyter to discharge any part of the episcopal office. Ordinations, etc., were performed by the bishops, but under the direction of the abbot and convent, and the bishop as such had no voice in the affairs of the monastery or the administration of the district ; and when a bishop was sent forth to other

parts it was by the authority of the convent. . . . In some instances an abbot might be a bishop . . . still he exercised his jurisdiction not as bishop but as abbot.’¹

The form which the Church assumed in Ireland was due largely to the condition of society ; the constitution of that country was tribal, there were no large cities, as in the Empire, and no great officials representing Imperial authority.

When a monastery was founded ‘ It was in fact a spiritual clan, the head of which was the Coarb, or heir of the original founder, whose name was thus perpetuated during the existence of the monastery. The narrative of the foundation of the Church of Trim given in the *Book of Armagh* is the earliest illustration of this. Felim, son of the King of Ireland, dedicated all his territory and possessions at Trim, in the county of Meath, together with all his substance, and also his clan to Patrick and his own son Fortchern.’²

This meant that there was a two-fold hereditary succession kept up at Trim, the clerical succession of Coarbs, and the lay succession of chieftains, both in the same family.

Another peculiarity of the Irish Church as distinct from the Roman was the double monastery, a foundation consisting of monks and nuns, presided over by an abbot, or often, as frequently happened in England, by an abbess.

Not only were the monks in such an establishment subject to the rule of the abbess, but the bishop,

¹ Plummer, *Bede*, vol. ii. p. 133.

² *Book of Armagh*, as quoted in Olden, *Church of Ireland*, p. 111.

who was necessary for the purpose of conferring orders, was likewise subject to her jurisdiction.

In the close association of women and men in the religious life and in the permission of clerical marriage, the Celtic Church also adopted a different view from the Roman.

In its system of government, then, the Celtic Church in England was modelled on the Church of Ireland ; the system of education also set up in England, the architecture and art, was that which obtained in Ireland at this period.

Those who wrote the history of English Christianity wrote at a time when the influence of Rome in England was beginning to be in the ascendant, moreover they were in strong sympathy with the Roman position ; it is not likely therefore that they should wish to tell us a great deal about that Church whose presence, to them, was a never-failing source of annoyance and trouble.

The questions of Easter and the tonsure were the only two questions on which the Synod of Whitby gave a decision ; the Church of the Northumbrians was still the Celtic Church of Ireland, and its discipline and peculiar usages were in all but these two respects left untouched by the decision of that assembly. The assent to the change in the computation of Easter had been most reluctantly given, and it is certain that any attempt to effect any further change would have had no chance of success.

It has never been suggested that the acceptance of the Roman Easter and tonsure in Ireland, and at Iona, meant that the Celtic Church in those places abandoned all its customs and came into line with

the Roman communion. Why then should it be thought that the acceptance of Easter and the tonsure in England would have a different effect, especially when it is borne in mind that the Southern Irish had already conformed to the universal custom in this respect ?

The question of the keeping of Easter had been forced into prominence some years before the Synod of Whitby, owing to the fact that Eanfled, Oswy's queen, was a Kentish princess. ' Thus it is said to have sometimes happened in those days that Easter was twice celebrated in one year, and that when the king having ended his fast was keeping Easter Sunday, the queen, with her followers, was still fasting and was celebrating Palm Sunday.' ¹

A Scot named Ronan, a zealous defender of the Roman Easter, had tried to induce Finan, Colman's predecessor in Lindisfarne, to abandon the Celtic custom. Bede's remarks on this are interesting ; he says : ' While he convinced many, or roused them to make a stricter inquiry after the truth, yet he could by no means prevail upon Finan.' ²

King Oswy had a son named Alchfrid, whom he made sub-king of Deira ; this young man came under the influence of Wilfrid, that ardent champion of Roman usages, and he renounced his allegiance to the Celtic party to which his father was so deeply attached.

Alchfrid had become attached to the Roman party some years before the Synod of Whitby. In 661 he had turned out Eata and his monks from the monastery of Ripon, which only a short time before he had

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 25.

² *Ibid.*

given them, because they refused to give up their Celtic customs.¹ That Oswy heartily disapproved of his son's change of view is clearly shown by the way he received the news of that son's intention to make a pilgrimage to Rome.

Alchfrid had made arrangements to accompany Benedict Biscop, afterwards Abbot of Wearmouth, to Rome, but Oswy made his son give up his projected journey and ordered him to remain in his own country.²

In 664, Agilbert, bishop of the West Saxons,³ (who had left his diocese, being highly offended because Coinwalch, King of Wessex, had taken upon himself to divide it without consulting him), came into Northumbria. This bishop, although he had received an Irish education,⁴ was a strong supporter of the Roman usages. During this visit to Northumbria Alchfrid prevailed on Agilbert to admit his friend Wilfrid to priest's orders. Bede's words on this are important; he says: 'Agilbert, bishop of the West Saxons, whom we have before spoken of, the friend of King Alchfrid and of Abbot Wilfrid, had at that time come into the province of the Northumbrians, and was staying some time among them: who also at the request of Alchfrid made Wilfrid a priest in his aforesaid monastery. He had with him a priest whose name was Agatho.

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 25

² Bede, *Hist. Abb.* Ch. 2.

³ 'Agilbert evidently retired from Wessex and became Bishop of Paris about A.D. 660. (*A.S.C.* and *Flor. Wig. ad. an.*) Eddius at the date 664 calls him 'transmarinus episcopus' (*vide* H. and S. vol. iii. p. 106): and, as H. and S. point out, he was undoubtedly Bishop of Paris shortly after the Synod of Whitby.'

⁴ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 7.

‘Therefore when the question was raised there concerning Easter, and the tonsure, and other ecclesiastical matters, it was arranged that a synod should be held in the monastery of Strenaeshalc, which signifies “the Bay of the Lighthouse,” at that time under the Abbess Hilda, a woman dedicated to God, and that there this question should be decided.’¹

What happened appears to have been this: Alchfrid, and his friend Wilfrid, took the opportunity afforded by the visit of Agilbert and Agatho to Northumbria to push forward their plans for the introduction of Roman customs. When they were all met together in the monastery of Ripon, it was evidently there decided to hold a synod at which, and the exact wording should be carefully noted, not only Easter, and the tonsure, but other ecclesiastical matters were to be discussed.

In other words, Wilfrid and his friends were going to pass judgment on the whole discipline and usages of the Celtic Church. It should be noted that Oswy’s name is conspicuously absent. Bede says not a word about his being consulted, and the whole thing seems to have been arranged by Alchfrid and his friends. The question would next arise, where was this synod to be held? Alchfrid was sub-king of Deira, and the chief monastery in Deira was without doubt the monastery of Whitby, at that time presided over by the Abbess Hilda.

In the chief monastery of his kingdom of Deira, therefore, Alchfrid arranged to hold his synod. Alchfrid had evidently not consulted his father when he made arrangements to go to Rome, and he be-

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 25.

haved in a most high-handed manner, as we shall see, when he attempted to get Wilfrid consecrated as Bishop of Deira, and thus threatened a separation of his kingdom from the spiritual jurisdiction of Celtic Lindisfarne.

It is therefore highly probable that in summoning the Synod of Whitby Alchfrid did so on his own initiative, and it seems highly probable that he was endeavouring to enforce his authority as sub-king over those in his kingdom who adhered to Celtic usages ; and that the Abbess Hilda might expect the same treatment as had been meted out to Eata and his monks at Ripon if Alchfrid and Wilfrid were allowed to have their way.

This high-handed action of his son, and the implied threat to the monastery of Whitby, would naturally have the effect of bringing Oswy and his bishop Colman to the defence of the Celtic customs.

Whatever it was that exactly happened, Oswy and Bishop Colman were present at the synod which met in the monastery of Whitby in the year 664. Eddius calls it a gathering of all the ranks of the Church system.¹

The composition of the synod must now be carefully noted : Alchfrid, sub-king of Deira, Bishop Agilbert, the priest Agatho, James the Deacon, Romanus, Queen Eanfled's chaplain, and Wilfrid ; these were the supporters of the Roman usages. It is to be observed that two of the chief opponents of Celtic usages were outsiders, two had been connected with the Roman mission in Kent ; the other was Wilfrid, but lately admitted to priest's orders.

¹ Eddius, *Vita Wilfridi*, Ch. x.

On the other side were King Oswy, Bishop Colman of Lindisfarne with his Scottish clerks, the Abbess Hilda and her followers, and Bishop Cedd, all natives of Northumbria, or connected with the Church of the Northumbrians, and representing by far the greater part of the ecclesiastical strength of the province.

We may pass by the discussions which are said to have ensued, we are concerned only with the alleged result. Bede sums up the result of the synod in these words: 'On the king's saying this, all those who were either seated in the assembly, or in attendance, both great and small, gave their assent, and renouncing the less perfect custom, hastened to conform to that which they had found to be better.'¹

This, however, is a great exaggeration. Let us see what Bede says on the same subject in the next chapter. Cedd, we are expressly told, adopted 'the Catholic Easter'; there is a strange silence about the Abbess Hilda: we know that she never ceased to be a bitter enemy of Wilfrid's,² and there is good reason to think that the decisions of the synod were ignored at Whitby for some time at least after the synod.

As regards Colman, we are told that he went home to consult what should be done in this case. Colman was powerless to give a decision as regarded the Church of Lindisfarne, since he was under the orders of the Abbot of Iona, to whom he would be bound to communicate what had taken place, and to abide by the decision of the convent.³

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. 25.

² W. M., *Gest. Pont.* III. 107; also Letter of Pope John, H. and S. vol. iii, p. 262.

³ See Chapter X. *infra*.

Immediately after the synod dispersed, Tuda, a Celtic bishop, who was already in Northumbria,¹ but who being a Southern Scot accepted the Roman Easter, was appointed Bishop of the Northumbrians in Colman's place.

This appears to have been the only immediate result of the synod so far as the Roman party were concerned ; it meant that Alchfrid had indeed succeeded in obtaining the appointment of a bishop who adhered to the Roman Easter ; that bishop, however, was a Celtic bishop, and in addition, he had been appointed Bishop of the Northumbrians—that is, he was appointed to act not only as Oswy's bishop, but also in his son's territory of Deira. But this seeming gain to the Roman party was counterbalanced by Oswy's parting gift to Bishop Colman, whom, we are told, he 'greatly loved.'² This was permission to the monastery of Lindisfarne to continue as it had been before, and to practise its peculiar usages unmolested.³ Tuda thus was not to have any connection with that monastery.

In the very year of Tuda's appointment, however, he was carried off by the plague, and so the bishopric of the Northumbrians again became vacant. The appointment of a Celtic bishop of the Northumbrians must have been galling to Alchfrid, and especially to Wilfrid ;⁴ immediately after Tuda's appointment, therefore, Alchfrid seems to have taken matters into his own hands.⁵

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. 26.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Vide* Ch. X. *infra*.

⁴ Tuda, though he kept the Roman Easter, was in Celtic orders, and we know how intensely Wilfrid disliked everything Celtic.

⁵ This is clearly shown by Bede's use of words 'interea,' not 'postea.' Browne has called attention to this : *Theodore and Wilfrith*, p. 35.

He determined to have a bishop of his own, and after his own heart ; he therefore sent Wilfrid to the King of Gaul so that he might be consecrated a bishop for his own kingdom of Deira. In this he evidently acted without consulting his father, and it is probable that Tuda was still alive.

Oswy appears to have replied to his son's high-handed action by appointing Ceadda, an ecclesiastic of the Celtic school, Bishop of the Church of York (*i.e.* of the Deirans), the same position his son had chosen Wilfrid to fill, and when the latter returned to England he found his patron Alchfrid dead, and his see filled by a bishop legally appointed.

The efforts of the Roman party had therefore so far resulted in the enforcement of the Roman Easter and tonsure over a portion of Northumbria ; all the other customs of the Celtic Church went on unchanged. Even as regards immediate compliance with the decrees of the synod regarding Easter and the tonsure, Lindisfarne for some years went on its own way, and there is a possibility that Whitby did the same, until Theodore's tact and personal influence accomplished what Wilfrid's impetuosity had failed to do.

In Deira the Celtic Ceadda was bishop, probably observing the Roman Easter, but Bernicia must have remained largely under the influence of Lindisfarne, and after the death of Tuda would be dependent more than ever on the monastery of Lindisfarne to supply its clergy.¹

¹ Ceadda is nowhere called ' Bishop of the Northumbrians ' by Bede. Alchfrid had sent Wilfrid to be consecrated ' for himself and for his own people,' and if, as seems likely, Oswy put Ceadda into the position intended for Wilfrid, his jurisdiction would not extend over Bernicia

Alchfrid's high-handed action as regards Wilfrid caused a break with his father. Howarth has very acutely drawn attention to this, and points out that Alchfrid's action threatened a separation of Deira from the jurisdiction of the rest of Oswy's kingdom in ecclesiastical matters. Oswy was not prepared for this. Alchfrid probably rebelled against his father; after 664 he disappears from history. After his death a splendid cross was erected to his memory at Bewcastle in Cumberland. Howarth suggests that he may have fled from his father's vengeance and there perished.¹

Oswy's attitude to Celtic Christianity may be well summed up in the words of Howarth: 'He was by no means, however, prepared to throw over the cause of the Church in which he had been baptized, and to which in matters of discipline and otherwise his clergy were still very loyal, and either to exchange the primacy of his own bishop at Lindisfarne for that of an Archbishop of Canterbury whose see was in the territory of another and independent king, or for the primacy of the greater bishop beyond the seas.'²

In 670 Oswy died;³ in 669 Theodore had come to England as Archbishop of Canterbury. 'Those two events made a profound change in Northumbrian affairs. The Roman party now got its chance; Ecgfrid, the new king, was heartily in sympathy with it, while Theodore made his powerful personality felt in every corner of the English kingdoms.

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. i. p. 222.

² *Ibid.* p. 220.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 5.

NOTE

The alleged participation of Oswy with Ecgbert, King of Kent, in sending the priest Wighard to Rome for consecration as Archbishop of Canterbury must be noticed here. In connection with this two letters are preserved by Bede, one purporting to have been written by Oswy and Ecgbert to the Pope, the other from Pope Vitalian to Oswy. Howarth has shown conclusively that they are either 'entirely spurious or hopelessly interpolated, for the following reasons: (1) This joint letter, if sent, would not be accessible to Bede, who gives only an abstract of it, together with what professes to be the Pope's reply, not to the two kings but to Oswy only. (2) The Pope writes to Oswy not about York but about Canterbury, with which he had nothing whatever to do. (3) The whole attitude of Oswy to the Pope and his special party in the north of England was very hostile, and it is most unlikely that Oswy would write to the Pope or the Pope to him. (4) 'Oswy had at York a bishop of his own choice, Ceadda, whose views were those of the Scotie Church.' This would make it still more unlikely that he would interfere in a Canterbury appointment. (5) There are two totally different accounts given by Bede, in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* Oswy, and not Ecgbert, is made the chief person in the appointment of Wighard; yet in the *History of the Abbots*, an earlier and more trustworthy work, Bede mentions Ecgbert of Kent, and no other person, as concerned in the choice of Wighard and his despatch to Rome. Howarth believes this Chapter (Bk. III. Ch. 29) to be a spurious interpolation, and he is no doubt right.

There is also the suspicious hiatus in Bede's transcript of the Pope's letter. But on this *vide* Howarth, vol. i. pp. 251-252, and Introduction, pp. cxxiv and cxxv.

CHAPTER III

THE CELTIC INFLUENCE IN NORTHUMBRIA— THE REIGN OF ECGFRID

ECGFRID, Oswy's younger son, who succeeded to the kingdom on the death of his father, held his mother's views on religion: he was a strong supporter of Wilfrid and the Roman party. Wilfrid had been placed in possession of the See of York by Archbishop Theodore, and Ceadda had gone into retirement at his monastery of Lastingham, and with a king who favoured his views reigning in Northumbria we may be sure that Wilfrid made full use of his opportunities to increase the Roman influence.

To this period of his life belong Wilfrid's efforts as a church builder. He set to work to erect church buildings which should eclipse anything yet seen in England. The Roman Church of that age could not vie with the Celtic in learning, but Wilfrid would show the Northumbrians what Rome could do in the way of architecture and music, things in which the Celtic Church was vastly inferior to that of Rome. Wilfrid was connected with three great churches, York, Ripon, and Hexham, and in all three he left his mark as a patron of architecture and the arts.

Hexham had been presented to Wilfrid by his friend, Queen Ethelthrytha.¹

Queen Ethelthrytha evidently handed over this magnificent gift to Wilfrid just before she herself, having obtained the reluctant consent of her husband, retired into the monastery of Coldingham.

Eddius gives us a description of the church which Wilfrid built at Hexham. He tells us that Wilfrid first of all constructed a crypt (*domus*) in the ground, made of polished stones, above this he built his church, in which were many pillars and chapels. The walls were of marvellous length and height, with numerous winding stairways in the thickness of the walls by means of which the towers (*cocleas*) were ascended, neither was there any building like it on this side of the Alps.²

Richard of Hexham has a much more elaborate description of this church. He tells us that the church was three storeys high, doubtless meaning the arcade of the nave, triforium, and clerestory. The walls, the pillars supporting them, and the chancel arch (*arcum sanctuarii*) were covered with wall paintings and ornamented with carved stone work.³

The church itself was dedicated to St. Andrew, in whose church Wilfrid had prayed while in Rome, and it 'must have been a copy in miniature of some Italian basilica constructed by the masons whom Wilfrid brought with him from Rome.'⁴

Hexham was the first church Wilfrid built, and as Raine acutely remarks, he would endeavour 'to awe

¹ Eddius, Ch. 22.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Richard of Hexham*, Bk. I. Ch. III., S.S. vol. i. pp. 12-13.

⁴ Raine, S.S. *Hexham*, vol. i. p. 14.

as well as delight the rude people who saw it rising.’¹ Hexham was a purely Italian building, and we may well believe Eddius’ statement that it was the finest church on this side of the Alps. The words of William of Malmesbury are a valuable witness to the Roman origin of Hexham. He says of Wilfrid that he built ‘many things indeed by his own judgment though under the guidance of the masons whom the hope of high pay had attracted from Rome. At that time it was a common saying, and it has even been stated in written records, that nowhere is there such a building on this side of the Alps.

‘At the present day those who come from Rome say the same, so that those who see the building at Hexham assert that they have before their eyes a model of Roman magnificence.’²

One other point in connection with Hexham must be noticed; the numerous side chapels in honour of the saints, and the dedication of the building itself.

All this was new—it was something quite unknown to the Celtic Church, whose churches always bore the name of the founder, or of the founder of the monastery from which the founder came.³ Thus did Wilfrid endeavour to weaken the Celtic influence: he threw into the opposite scale, against the superior learning of the Celtic Church, the splendid architecture of the Church of Rome. By magnificent architecture, beautiful music and gorgeous vestments, he would make up for lack of learning.

¹ *Op. cit.* p. 11.

² W. M., as quoted in Leland, *Collectanea*, iii. 259.

³ *Vide* Ch. I. *supra*.

Wilfrid had brought to Northumbria his future biographer, Eddius ; it was to be his duty to spread the knowledge of the Gregorian method of chanting.

Ecgfrid's reign, too, saw the founding of the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, whose influence on behalf of Roman customs can hardly be over-estimated.

These monasteries gave the Roman party the thing they were most in need of—a liberal education without the necessity of going to Ireland for it, and, what is more important, an education under the direction of those in sympathy with Roman ways.

Hitherto all English schools had been permeated with Celtic thought, and had Wearmouth and Jarrow never been built Wilfrid's work would have been largely thrown away, since with a king with Celtic sympathies and with bishops of the same way of thinking in Northumbria, above all with the rank and file very much opposed to giving up their old customs, Italian influence would have survived in such an attenuated condition that it would have been quite unable to make itself felt.

Wearmouth and Jarrow enabled Acca to build on Wilfrid's foundations and to carry on his master's designs ; above all they made possible his great educational campaign.

Wearmouth produced Bede, whose part in furthering the interests of Rome we shall see in a later chapter.¹

Thus it happened that when practically everything was lost to Wilfrid and his adherents there yet remained the two monasteries of Wearmouth and

¹ *Vide* Ch. IX. *infra*.

Jarrow, in which Roman customs were preserved until the time was ripe to extend their influence. Benedict Biscop, the founder of Wearmouth, was of noble birth. Bede tells us that he was a 'minister' (? thane) of King Oswy, from whom he had received a property suitable to his rank.¹

Benedict was then twenty-five years of age. Like other well-born and educated young men of his time he decided to adopt a religious life, 'therefore having left his native country he went to Rome.'² He returned to England, only to leave it to visit Rome a second time, and during this second absence from his native land he entered the monastery of Lerins, and received there the tonsure. Again, for the third time, he visited Rome at the time of Theodore's appointment to the archbishopric of Canterbury, and was commissioned by the Pope to escort Theodore on his journey to England.

On Theodore's arrival at Canterbury, Benedict was for two years placed in charge of the monastery of the Blessed Peter during the enforced absence of the Abbot Hadrian. Immediately on the arrival of Hadrian in Canterbury, Benedict set out for the fourth time to Rome, and on this visit he assiduously prosecuted his mission of collecting books for the great library he was amassing for Northumbria.³ Howarth remarks that he secured many books by gift and purchase in Italy, where they were little valued at this time, and where learning was sinking lower and lower.⁴

¹ Bede, *Hist. Abb.* Ch. 1.

² *Op. cit.* Ch. 2.

³ *Op. cit.* Ch. 4.

⁴ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. pp. 253-254.

Benedict now returned home and arrived in Northumbria about the year 674. He visited King Ecgfrid, whose wife, Ethelthrytha, had just deserted him for the life of a convent.

Bede tells us how Benedict gave Ecgfrid a glowing account of all the things he had seen,¹ and that he determined that his church should be built 'in the Roman manner which he always loved.'² Benedict therefore sent to Gaul for masons, and so rapidly was the work of construction pushed on that in less than a year the building was ready to receive its furniture and decorations. Benedict brought over from Gaul workmen who understood glass-making, a thing up to this time unknown in England; vestments also, and furnishings for the altars he brought back from abroad for his new church.

Besides all these treasures, Benedict brought over a number of paintings of sacred subjects to adorn the walls of his church, a representation of the Blessed Virgin and pictures of the twelve Apostles to adorn the centre of the apse of the church. The south wall was covered with pictures representing the Gospel history, the north wall was adorned with scenes from the Apocalypse. This was intended to teach those who were ignorant of letters.³

The church, of course, was dedicated to the Blessed Peter. Benedict had brought back with him a letter of privileges from Pope Agatho, and this he took care to get confirmed by King Ecgfrid and his Witan, by which the monastery which he had built 'should be made for ever safe and free from all external inter-

¹ Bede, *Hist. Abb.* Ch. 4.

² *Op. cit.* Ch. 5.

³ *Op. cit.* Ch. 6.

ference whatever.’¹ Thus, when some years later king and bishops were all out of sympathy with Wilfrid and his ideals, these could be practised free from interference in Wearmouth, and the daughter monastery of Jarrow which was founded a few years later.

In the year 674 Ecgfrid separated from his queen Ethelthrytha ; for twelve years she had refused to concede to him the rights of a husband, and had been supported in this unreasonable attitude by Wilfrid. Bede calls this ‘ preserving the glory of perfect virginity,’ and he adds that Bishop Wilfrid had himself informed him that ‘ Ecgfrid promised to give him lands and large sums of money if he could persuade the queen to treat him as a husband.’² Wilfrid behaved in this affair between Ecgfrid and his queen in a most underhand way. Thomas of Ely, a writer who would try to make out the best case for Wilfrid and Ethelthrytha, says : ‘ Nevertheless the king aforesaid being often touched by carnal desire, besought the blessed Bishop Wilfrid with the offer of many gifts, in the hope that he should be able to persuade her to the marriage couch. Nevertheless the holy man, as it were assenting to the wish of the king, dissuaded the queen, telling her of the blessings in store for her if she guarded her chastity.’³

Ethelthrytha at last obtained her husband’s consent to adopt a religious life and she entered the monastery of Coldingham. When his wife deserted him Ecgfrid

¹ Bede, *Hist. Abb.* Ch. 6.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. 19.

³ *Life of Ethelthrytha*, by Thomas of Ely, abr. in Capgrave, vol. i. p. 424, ed. Horstmann.

married again ; his second wife was a Wessex princess called Eormenburga. The new queen intensely disliked Wilfrid, and, being aware of the king's displeasure against him, did all she could to inflame it. Wilfrid's supporters, on the other hand, were evidently not sparing in their denunciations of the queen. Eadmer calls her ' the persecutor of all good men,'¹ and Richard of Hexham says, ' Eormenburga . . . in whose heart Satan blowing up a flame of hatred and jealousy against the aforesaid bishop, by means of her tongue stirred up the mind of the king to expel the bishop.'²

This being the state of affairs, it is no wonder that Ecgfrid should have ejected Wilfrid from his kingdom and confiscated his monasteries of Ripon and Hexham.

Wilfrid on leaving Northumbria went first to Ethelthrytha in her cloister at Ely ; from there he proceeded to the Continent. This was in the year 678. Wilfrid at length reached Rome, where the Pope summoned a council of more than fifty bishops and presbyters³ to decide upon his appeal against the treatment meted out to him.

This council gave its judgment in favour of Wilfrid. In 680 therefore, armed with the decision of the Apostolic See, Wilfrid returned to Northumbria. We are told that he came humbly to the king, Ecgfrid, and showed him the written judgment of the Apostolic See, with the consent and subscription of the whole synod with bulls and seals.⁴

¹ Eadmer, *Vita Wilfridi* in Capgrave, vol. ii. p. 436.

² Richard of Hexham, Bk. I. Ch. 7, S.S. vol. i. p. 24.

³ Eddius, Ch. 29.

⁴ *Ibid.* Ch. 33.

Ecgfrid summoned a council to deal with the matter ; the assembly met, and after raising certain difficulties they alleged that the decision had been obtained by bribery, and refused absolutely to obey it. Not only so, but—‘ By the decree of the king and of his councillors, with the consent of the bishops who held his bishopric, they resolved that he should be put in prison and kept in custody as a common person for nine months.’¹

At length, owing to the intercession of the queen, who was residing at Coldingham with the Abbess Ebbe, he was released. He did not again return to Northumbria during Ecgfrid’s lifetime.

Ecgfrid’s reign witnessed an attempt to extend the jurisdiction of the Northumbrian Church over districts not only inhabited by Celtic Christians, but actually outside the limits of the kingdom of Northumbria ! Eddius tells us that in the early years of Ecgfrid’s reign the Picts invaded Ecgfrid’s kingdom ; they were repulsed by him with great slaughter,² and were, according to Eddius, largely in subjection to Northumbria for the rest of his reign. Wilfrid had been replaced by Benedict Biscop in the king’s favour, and Benedict was certainly as anxious to extend the Roman influence as Wilfrid.

Ecgfrid was an enthusiastic pupil ; largely—we cannot but think—under the influence of their teaching he determined to bring under Roman influence those Celtic districts which adjoined his kingdom, inhabited by Picts, Britons, and Scots. All three bore the

¹ *Op. cit.*

² Eddius, Ch. 19. Eddius’ account of the extent of the Pictish subjection is evidently much exaggerated, as we shall see later.

brunt of Ecgfrid's missionary enthusiasm. Theodore, too, was now Archbishop of Canterbury, and his powerful influence would certainly be behind this attempt to compel the obedience of the Celtic Church. The way for this had been prepared by the conquests of Oswy, who, after the battle of the Winwaed (A.D. 655), had become the most powerful monarch in Britain. This king was successful against his northern neighbours the Picts.

We read in Bede that he reduced to his dominion (regno, *i.e.* incorporated in Northumbria) 'the greater part of a tribe of the Picts,' and he evidently made tributary a still larger area of their country, for we read that in the year 681 one of the Pictish provinces was tributary to Northumbria (*imperio subiecta*). Bede says of Oswy, 'Gentem Pictorum maxima ex parte regno Anglorum subiecit.'¹ This must be translated 'He reduced to the immediate dominion of the English the greater part of a tribe of the Picts,' for the following reasons: (1) I have shown that² when Bede speaks of the 'nation' he invariably uses the word 'natio.' 'Gens' in Bede always means either 'tribe,' or it expresses the nationality of one or more individuals. (2) Bede always clearly distinguishes between 'regnum,' the immediate dominion of a king, and 'imperium,' the overlordship which he might exercise over other kingdoms and tribes.³ (3) In Book IV. Ch. 12 of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* Bede speaks of Bishop Trumwine as appointed 'to the province of the Picts, which at that

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 24.

² *Vide* Ch. VIII. *infra*.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 24; Bk. II. Ch. 5. *Vide* also Plummer. *Bede*, vol. ii. pp. 86 and 186.

time was subject to the *imperium* of the English,' clearly showing that the Picts were then only tributary, and by his use of the singular 'provinciam' we see that only one province was tributary, the rest of the provinces being evidently unaffected.

We know that in the year 681 Brude, King of the Picts, attacked the Orkneys, and in 684 he was so strong that Ecgfrid was advised not to attack him. Unless the meaning of Bede is clearly grasped we cannot fully see the import of Ecgfrid's missionary venture in the land of the Picts. In 681 Archbishop Theodore and Ecgfrid launched their experiment; a new bishopric was constituted for the land of the Picts. The seat of this bishopric was fixed in the monastery of Abercorn, in the Pictish territory which Oswy had annexed to Northumbria ('regione Anglorum'), 'not within the dangerous territory of the Picts, but well within the Anglian boundary,'¹ and in a district where the two populations would be intermingled.²

Trumwine, the new bishop, therefore had his see fixed in territory which had been annexed to the kingdom of Northumbria, and therefore amid a population which was largely in communion with the Celtic Church.

But although Bishop Trumwine was safely entrenched within the protection of the Northumbrian kingdom, it is important to observe that he was given jurisdiction outside the Anglian boundary, and over

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 104.

² Plummer has drawn attention to the fact that Bede's words do not exclude the possibility that elements of both populations may have co-existed on either side of the Forth. (Plummer, *Bede*, vol. ii. p. 262.)

territories where the Celtic Church held undisputed sway.

In 684 Ecgfrid invaded Ireland. Bede's account of this is very strange. He says: 'Ecgfrid, King of the Northumbrians, having sent his general Berct to Ireland with an army, miserably laid waste a harmless people, who were also most friendly to the English nation, insomuch that the invading force spared not even churches or monasteries.'¹

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says: 'In this year Ecgferth sent an army against the Scots, and Berht his earldorman was with it, and miserably they afflicted and burnt God's churches.' William of Malmesbury stresses the fact that this invasion of Ireland was entirely unprovoked. He says: 'He overwhelmed the Irish with widespread slaughter, a harmless race of men, who with a native innocence never attempted to do anyone a mischief.'²

Two facts then stand clearly out in the English authorities: (1) The attack was an entirely unprovoked one upon a most friendly nation; (2) the chief result of it seems to have been a wholesale destruction of churches and monasteries.

The *Annals of Ulster* say: 'The Saxons wasted Magh Breg³ and several churches in the month of June.' Two early authorities, one English, the other Irish, throw light on the object of Ecgfrid's Irish expedition. In *The Three Fragments of Irish Annals* under the date 704 we read: 'In this year the men of Erin consented to receive one jurisdiction, and one

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 26.

² W. M., *Gesta Regum*, Bk. I. Ch. 51, *R.S.* vol. 1.

³ Part of South Meath. *Vide* McCarthy in *Rolls*, ed. of *Ann. Ult.*

rule from Adamnan, in regard to the celebration of Easter, and the tonsuring of all the clerks of Ireland after the manner of St. Peter. There had been dissention in Erin up to that time, for some of the clergy of Erin celebrated Easter on the Sunday next after the fourteenth of the month of April, and had the tonsure of Peter the Apostle, like St. Patrick, but others, following that of Columkille, celebrated Easter on the fourteenth of April, on whatever day of the week the fourteenth happened to fall, and had the tonsure of Simon Magus ; a third party agreed with neither of these. The clergy of Ireland held many synods on the subject ; to these synods the clergy used to come, accompanied by the laity, so that battles and deaths occurred between them ; and many evils resulted in Ireland in consequence of this, and also a great murrain of cows, and a very great famine, and many diseases, and the *devastation of Ireland by foreign hordes. It was so in the time of Adamnan.*¹

Symeon of Durham, the other authority, tells us that Ecgfrid was killed by the Picts ‘ because he had unjustly laid waste Ireland.’²

We have seen how Ecgfrid had attempted to extend the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Northumbria over the Picts, and had for this purpose established a missionary-bishopric with its seat at Abercorn on the Firth of Forth ; now we find him invading, for no apparent reason, a perfectly friendly country. The statement in the *Three Fragments of Irish Annals* above quoted, that in the days of Adamnan the question

¹ *Three Fragments of Irish Annals*, p. 113.

² Symeon of Durham, *Hist. Regum*, Ch. 12, R.S. vol. ii.

of the adoption of the Roman Easter led to the devastation of Ireland by foreign hordes, together with Symeon's assertion that Ecgfrid was killed by the Picts because he had laid waste Ireland ; the agreement of all the authorities that there was a widespread destruction of churches ; and that it was an attack entirely unprovoked upon a friendly nation, seems to point to Ecgfrid's invasion of Ireland as another of his attempts to force Celtic Christianity to adopt Roman usages.

This expedition of Ecgfrid's would naturally goad the Picts into rebellion ; he had planted his missionary bishop in territory conquered from them, and that bishop was endeavouring to exercise his jurisdiction in purely Celtic districts. Now came the devastation of Ireland : the inevitable followed. The Picts rose in defence of their Church and liberties.

Not only the Picts and Scots, but the Britons also suffered from Ecgfrid's missionary zeal. Oswy's conquests had evidently extended the authority of Northumbria over the Britons who inhabited Lancashire and Cumberland. The English conquerors appear to have made no attempt to interfere with the religious observances of the Britons ; Ecgfrid, however, was determined to extend the Roman influence over all the territories tributary to him (subject to his imperium). His victory over the Picts in the early part of his reign must have increased his power over these British districts, accordingly we read that some time about 669¹ he gave Wilfrid the districts

¹ Ripon was consecrated early in Ecgfrid's reign, and it was at the consecration that this list of gifts to the church given by Eddius was read out.

(regiones) ' iuxta Rippel, et in Gaedyne, et in regione Dunitinga, et in Caetlevum. . . . ' ¹

After Wilfrid's expulsion Ecgfrid would seem to have resumed possession of these lands, for, in 685, we find him granting lands in the same districts, some of which he appears to have granted before to Wilfrid. In that very early authority, the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, we are told that Ecgfrid gave to the Church of Lindisfarne, Carlisle (civitas Luel), and also ' King Ecgfrid gave to him the land which is called Cartmel and all the Britons with it, and that " vill " which is called Suth-gedluit. ' ² This last passage is important, since we have it deliberately stated that the Church of Lindisfarne was given jurisdiction over British Christians, who of course were in communion with the Celtic Church.

This is another example of Ecgfrid's attempts to extend the jurisdiction of the Northumbrian Church over purely Celtic districts, which had hitherto been in the undisputed possession of the Celtic Church.

In 685 Ecgfrid marched into the country of the Picts ' greatly against the advice of his friends, and particularly of Cuthbert. ' ³ He suffered a crushing defeat and was killed with nearly all his army at the battle of Nectansmere.

Northumbria never recovered from this crushing blow. Bede's words show clearly the magnitude of the disaster : ' From this time the prospects and

¹ Rippel is the district north of the Ribble in Lancashire ; Dunatinga is the district round the river Dudden ; Caetlevum is Cartmel in Furness. (Raine.) Eddius, Ch. xvii.

² Suth-gedluit—probably one of the Yealands near Morecambe Bay is intended. (Arnold in *Rolls Symeon*, vol. i. p. 200.)

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 26.

strength of the realm of the English began "to backward flow and gliding fall away." For both the Picts recovered the land which they had once held in possession, which the English and the Scots dwelling in Britain had taken, and also a certain number of the Britons recovered their liberty, and even yet are in possession of it for about forty-six years.'¹

Ecgfrid's defeat at Nectansmere was disastrous to his infant missionary effort for bringing the Picts into the fold of the orthodox Roman Communion; 'the terrible desolation of Irish churches and monasteries by him must have greatly exasperated the Columban clergy of Ireland and Scotland, who were doubtless not very well pleased at the planting of the outpost of the very aggressive southern Church on their borders at Abercorn.'² Bishop Trumwine and all the inmates of the monastery of Abercorn fled; the Picts overran the district, and not only shook off the yoke of Northumbria from the tributary province but also reconquered the portion of Pictish territory which Oswy had annexed about thirty years before.

'The Saxones Ambrones (*i.e.* the Northumbrians) never again took tribute from the Picts.' Thus does the writer who goes by the name of Nennius sum up from the Celtic point of view the results of this great victory.³

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 26.

² Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. pp. 105-106.

³ Nennius edition Mommsen, p. 203.

CHAPTER IV

THEODORE OF CANTERBURY—HIS INFLUENCE ON CELTIC CHRISTIANITY

THEODORE of Tarsus had come to England as Archbishop of Canterbury towards the close of Oswy's reign, and he held the see twenty-one years, three months, and twenty-six days.¹

As the great work he was enabled to do for the English Church falls entirely within the reign of Ecgfrid, this will be a convenient place to estimate the extent and the effects of his work in relation to bringing the Celtic Church more into line with Western Christendom.

Theodore was faced with a task of immense difficulty which needed the greatest tact and patience. The Synod of Whitby had given its decision in favour of the Roman Easter ; that decision, however, had been most reluctantly wrung from those who favoured the Celtic method of computation.

The Celtic party contained all the most important personages in the religious life of Northumbria, and it included the great monastery of Whitby, with the Abbess Hilda. The Roman party was largely composed of strangers from outside the province, with

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 2.

the exception of the Scot Ronan, and Wilfrid, then a young and comparatively unknown personage ; Oswy had compelled an assent in virtue of his royal power. When Theodore came to Canterbury, Wilfrid was made sole bishop of all the Northumbrians (that is, he was the only bishop who was officially recognised as such by the Sees of Rome and Canterbury). The territory over which he ruled was vast, and it was utterly impossible that he should give it adequate supervision. The great Celtic stronghold of Lindisfarne had been permitted by King Oswy to retain its independence and its peculiar customs.¹ This meant that the Celtic Church was entrenched in a powerful position under the king's protection right in the heart of the kingdom.

Ever since the coming of Aidan there must have been large numbers of Celtic non-diocesan bishops working in connection with the Irish mission.² The decision of the Synod of Whitby, which of course they did not recognize, would entirely fail to keep them out of England ; they would be sure of a welcome from a population which strongly favoured their views, and the monasteries of Lindisfarne and Whitby would receive them with open arms.

All important Celtic monasteries had one or more bishops under the abbot, for the purpose of conferring orders, and we may be sure that Lindisfarne was no exception to the rule ; Abbot Eata would have no difficulty in obtaining any bishops he might require from Iona or elsewhere ; so that apart from

¹ *Vide* Ch. X. *infra*.

² *Vide* Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 3. Also Plummer note on this same chapter.

the numbers of Celtic clergy who were doubtless still in Northumbria, the monastery of Lindisfarne would be able to keep up its supply of clergy quite independently of Wilfrid, and this, too, under the protection of Oswy, who never lost his affection for Celtic ways. The fact that the Synod of Whitby entirely failed to keep out the Celtic clergy is abundantly proved by the amount of legislation which it was necessary to pass against them.¹ Had not their presence in large numbers been an ever-present annoyance to the Roman party such legislation would never have seen the light.

The remarks which Eddius puts into the mouth of Wilfrid are very much to the point here, since Wilfrid clearly says that there are several bishops in England, and that he is referring to Celtic bishops is certain from the remark that follows that they are—Quartodecimans, as are the Britons and Scots ordained by them.²

The fact that it was impossible to keep the Celtic clergy from entering England was not the only difficulty that the Roman party had to contend with. All the great monasteries were Celtic in sympathy, even as late as 685 the Abbess of Whitby had a bishop living in the monastery, subject to her jurisdiction, and the fact that Trumwine came to Whitby as a fugitive, after his ejection from Abercorn, does not alter the fact that it was possible at so late a date for a bishop to submit to the authority of an abbess.³

We can scarcely doubt but that the Abbess Hilda had a bishop under her at Whitby. That monastery

¹ *Vide* Ch. XIV., *infra*.

² Eddius, Ch. 12.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 26.

was a mixed one, founded when the Celtic Church held undisputed sway. It would therefore follow the universal rule of that Church, and certain it is that the Abbess Hilda, the lifelong enemy of Wilfrid,¹ who had been with difficulty² persuaded to adopt the Roman Easter, was not prepared to abandon the whole system of Church government to which she had been accustomed. With the solitary exception that the decision of the Synod of Whitby as regards Easter and the tonsure may have been accepted, the monastery of Whitby went on just the same as before.

The fact that all the great monasteries were in Celtic hands meant an additional difficulty for Theodore. He could certainly try to wipe them out, but, even if he should succeed, which was very doubtful, what was he to put in their place?

These great foundations were deeply entrenched in the affections of the people; the whole educational system of England had been built up by them and was entirely in their hands. If they were destroyed Christianity in the north would most certainly be destroyed with them. They supplied all the clergy and teachers, an ample supply of both being assured by the continual intercourse between the English monasteries and the Celtic Church in Ireland and in Scotland. Theodore knew that if he destroyed the Celtic monasteries he would have no clergy, while if he drove them into open rebellion against himself he might lose the whole north of

¹ William of Malmesbury, *Gest. Pont.* III. 107; also Letter of Pope John to Kings Ethelred and Aldfrid (H. and S. vol. iii. p. 262).

² *Vide* Ch. II. *supra*.

England. The best he could hope for would be a grievous schism. Had Wilfrid and not Theodore been Archbishop of Canterbury there is little doubt but that he would have taken extreme measures against the Celtic Church, and the result would in all probability have been the end of Roman influence in Northumbria for generations !

But Theodore was not Wilfrid, and it was due to his wise and tactful handling of a difficult situation that the way was paved for the eventual triumph of Roman influence in the North of England. Much as he disliked the mixed monasteries, Theodore wisely decided to allow them to continue without interference.¹ He thus avoided encountering their active opposition and stirring up trouble which might have seen the end of the influence of Canterbury in Northumbria. Theodore's plan seems to have been to allow as much latitude as he could in conformity with obedience to himself, and he wisely adopted measures of conciliation.

The Roman authorities were evidently not quite easy in their own minds about the Archbishop. Thomas of Elmham says : ' . . . Hadrian full of grace, sent by the Apostolic Vitalian to work together with Theodore, was . . . carefully considering in accordance with the orders he had received lest Theodore, who was a Greek by birth, might perchance according to the custom of the Greeks introduce into the English Church anything contrary to the faith.' ²

¹ *Vide* Theodore's *Penitential*, Bk. II. Ch. 6, Section 8, H. and S. vol. iii. p. 195.

² Thomas of Elmham, Title VIII. Sec. 57, *R.S.* p. 243.

There were evidently fears that Theodore would not be sufficiently severe with those who differed from the Apostolic See. These fears were well grounded, for in addition to being a most saintly man Theodore was also a broad-minded and enlightened statesmen.

Arrived in England, Theodore set about making himself acquainted with the state of the country. Bede says: 'So Theodore journeying through all parts ordained bishops in suitable places, and with their assistance corrected such things as he found faulty. Among the rest, when he charged Bishop Ceadda with not having been duly consecrated, he in the most humble language answered: If you know that I have not duly received episcopal consecration I willingly resign the office, for I never thought myself worthy of it, but though unworthy, for obedience sake I submitted when bidden to undertake it. Theodore, hearing his humble answer, said that he should not resign the bishopric, and he himself completed his ordination after the Catholic manner.'¹

This passage should be carefully noted. Bede informs us in the same chapter that Theodore ordained a man named Putta to the See of Rochester, which was then vacant. No other appointment to a bishopric by Theodore is mentioned by Bede until several years after his arrival at Canterbury—no other diocese was vacant. The sub-division of Northumbria did not take place until 678, that of East Anglia took place in 673, that of Mercia in 674. How then are we to understand this passage, which evidently refers to the consecration of several bishops during the

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 2.

first visitation of all England by Archbishop Theodore? The key to Bede's meaning is found in the mention of Ceadda. That bishop's consecration was to a certain extent in accordance with Celtic custom, since Celtic bishops had assisted at his consecration, and whatever it was that Theodore objected to in his consecration, we are told he made right.

Ceadda, after he had thus obtained recognition from Theodore, retired into his monastery of Lastingham, leaving Wilfrid to act as bishop of all the Northumbrians. Ceadda, however, was evidently one among several Celtic bishops who must have consented to submit to whatever ceremony Theodore thought fit to impose on them, in order to receive recognition as 'Catholic' bishops. The words *in quibus*—'among whom'—can hardly mean anything but that Theodore prevailed on certain bishops besides Ceadda to submit to his authority.¹ Theodore must have been a man of wonderful personal fascination, one of those men of powerful yet tactful personality, who make their influence everywhere felt. This is strikingly proved by his being able to make peace between the two kings of Mercia and Northumbria in 679.²

Theodore, therefore, as a result of his first visitation of the North of England, had the satisfaction of being able to persuade certain Celtic bishops, of whom Ceadda was one, to submit to a 'confirmation' of their consecration by himself. This would have

¹ Plummer remarks that if the events took place as Bede represents, Theodore must have consecrated Chad as a bishop without a see. Plummer: *Bede*, vol. ii. p. 207. Ceadda in fact was an abbot of a Celtic monastery, who consented to receive what Theodore considered valid consecration from him.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 21.

the result that in the Celtic monasteries there would be bishops whose orders according to the Roman mission would be beyond reproach.

It has been pointed out that Wilfrid, the one solitary bishop exercising diocesan jurisdiction in Northumbria, had a far bigger territory than he could possibly manage. He was, however, a man who would most certainly give up nothing he had once held without a struggle. Besides, matters were made even more difficult by Wilfrid's uncompromising attitude towards Celtic customs. He was an out-and-out Romanist, he would not yield a single inch, and he would most certainly coerce those who differed from him if he got the chance.

Any agreement on the principle of give-and-take being impossible where Wilfrid was concerned, Theodore was in a difficult position. Wilfrid and his followers were a small minority; had the Celtic clergy been entirely cleared out of Northumbria they could not have undertaken to supply their place, and the country would have been in danger of relapsing into heathendom. On the other hand, Theodore did not wish to quarrel with Wilfrid, since that would have removed the one powerful supporter of Rome in the North of England.

Theodore acted with consummate wisdom. He left Wilfrid in undisturbed possession of his huge diocese and waited his time to improve matters, but he made sure that in the monasteries which favoured Celtic usages there should be bishops rightly consecrated as he considered.

Lindisfarne remained untouched, the mixed monasteries were not interfered with, and many other

Celtic customs were permitted to continue. Theodore, however, had the satisfaction of having brought some of the Celtic monastic bishops into the orthodox Roman fold as far as their consecration was concerned, and he had taken the first great step towards healing the unfortunate schism which had been created in Northumbria as a result of the Synod of Whitby.

In 678 Theodore was given an opportunity of still further increasing the Roman influence in Northumbria. Ecgfrid, unable to put up with Wilfrid any longer, expelled him from his kingdom, and the Archbishop took the chance thus offered of increasing the number of diocesan bishops in Northumbria. He accordingly divided Wilfrid's huge diocese into two, and appointed Bosa, a monk of Whitby, to be Bishop of Deira, with his seat in York, and Eata, the Abbot of Lindisfarne, he appointed Bishop of the Bernicians.

These appointments deserve especial notice ; they are yet another instance of Theodore's wisdom. He did not bring up men from Kent, whole-hearted supporters of Rome, to fill the vacant sees ; he chose two of the strongest supporters of Celtic usages he could have found, and persuaded them to be consecrated by him. One came from a mixed monastery, an institution which Theodore abhorred, the other was abbot of the monastery of Lindisfarne, where the bishop remained subject to the abbot for nearly sixty years after the Synod of Whitby.¹

Bede's words in recording Eata's appointment deserve especial notice. He says : ' He had his

¹ See Chapter X. *infra*, where this is fully discussed.

bishop's chair in the church of Hexham *or* in the church of Lindisfarne ; ¹ a bishop with his episcopal seat in two churches, or in either of two, but which Bede seems uncertain—a most peculiar expression. What evidently happened was that the Abbot of Lindisfarne was persuaded to allow himself to be consecrated as a bishop of the Northumbrians, still, however, retaining his peculiar position as head of the great Celtic monastery of Lindisfarne. The case is a similar one to that of Cedd, who was bishop of the East Saxons, but was at the same time Abbot of Lastingham in Yorkshire.

Theodore thus brought the great Church of Lindisfarne directly under his influence ; that church was not interfered with, but its abbot, while retaining undisturbed his position as head of the community, was in addition a bishop owing allegiance to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

We see the same wisdom displayed in all Theodore's appointments. He almost invariably chose men of Celtic sympathies, and while he permitted them to retain many practices of which he himself disapproved, he ensured that they were consecrated according to the Roman rite, and obtained their submission to himself as their metropolitan.

In 681 Theodore took another step towards increasing the number of bishops in Northumbria. He persuaded Eata to give up the oversight of at least part of the district which he had been given, and consecrated an additional bishop for Northumbria, with his see at Hexham. At the same time Trumwine was appointed a missionary bishop, with

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 12.

jurisdiction over the Picts outside Northumbrian territory.¹

Theodore, however, although he could be lenient in permitting much he would doubtless have liked to see abolished, in the interest of increasing his own authority, and, by degrees, bring those who differed from him into line, knew how to be firm when occasion required. Two of the Celtic bishops whom he had appointed, Tunbert of Hexham and Wilfrid of Mercia, evidently indulged too freely in their Celtic proclivities—and the Archbishop promptly deposed them.²

Theodore's influence was now at the zenith of its power. He had extended his influence over the whole of the provinces of the English ; by his division of territories he had instituted a proper diocesan episcopate ; his policy of conciliation had won for him the trust and affection of those in England who clung to Celtic usages, and had been the means of extending his influence even over that Celtic stronghold in the north, the Church of Lindisfarne. Bede says truly : ' He was the first of the archbishops to whom the whole English Church consented to submit.'³

Under Theodore the first council of the English Church was held in the year 673 at Hertford ; there, for the first time, bishops representing all the English kingdoms met together under the presidency of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and acknowledged his authority over them. Theodore came north to consecrate Cuthbert in 685 ; in 686 he secured the

¹ *Vide* Ch. III. *supra*.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Chs. 6 and 28.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 2.

restoration of Wilfrid ; thenceforward the disturbed state of the whole country and the weakness of the kingdom of Kent, which was for some time in a state of anarchy, made it impossible for him to interfere effectively outside his own diocese. After 685 the influence of Canterbury steadily declined, indeed for some years it lost the allegiance of almost all the southern province, and the suffragans under its jurisdiction were reduced to one—the Bishop of Rochester. The See of Canterbury never recovered authority over the province of York ; Haddan and Stubbs say that communications between foreign churches and these two sees are more frequent than communication between themselves.¹

Theodore's fifteen years of influence in Northumbria, however, sowed the seeds which bore fruit in later days ; it prevented Roman influence being wiped out during the Celtic reaction which followed the Synod of Whitby and which culminated in the reign of Aldfrid.

When Roman influence, however, was restored, it was not through the See of Canterbury but by means of an Archbishop of York, who derived his authority direct from the Pope ; and the connection of Northumbria was strengthened and increased by means of the close connection with the Western Empire established by those Englishmen, like Alcuin, who brought their country into direct communication with the empire of Charlemagne, and so made it in reality a part of Western Christendom.

¹ *Vide* H. and S. Note on Alcuin's Letter to Ethelheard Councils, vol. iii. p. 521.

CHAPTER V

THE EVENTS OF THE YEAR 685

THE year 685 was a fateful one in the history of the English race. The defeat of Ecgfrid at Nectansmere was a crushing blow for the kingdom of Northumbria, from which it never recovered ; and although Aldfrid, who succeeded Ecgfrid, was given many years of peace, yet towards the end of his reign the boundaries of Northumbria were still further reduced by Pictish conquest.¹

But severe as was the blow struck at English prestige by the Pictish victory, another danger was at the same time threatening the South of England, where the dispossessed Celts made a last terrible effort, and an effort which almost succeeded, to recover their lost supremacy and to reduce to their submission the English settlers.

The leader of the Celts in this last effort to rid their land of the Saxon yoke was Caedwalla, King of Wessex. The events of his life have been little understood and hopelessly confused by historians. It will be necessary, therefore, to very carefully examine all the available sources of information regarding him. These sources fall into two great

¹ See Chapter VI. *infra*.

divisions : they are either Celtic or Saxon. First let us examine the Saxon sources. We will begin with Bede.

All that Bede tells us about Caedwalla is contained in four chapters of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. He first suddenly appears about the year 685 among the South Saxons. Bede says : ' Caedwalla, a young man of great vigour, of the royal race of the Gewissae, an exile from his native land, coming with an army, slew King Ethelwalch, and wasted that province with cruel slaughter and devastation, but he was soon expelled by Berthun and Andhun, the king's earldormen.' ¹

Next we hear of him as King of the West Saxons. After the death of Coinwalch, the King of the West Saxons, there was a period of anarchy in that province ; the sub-kings took upon them the government of that kingdom, and dividing it among themselves, held it for about ten years.²

Bede then goes on to say that during the episcopate of Haedde, who was consecrated at some time during these ten years, ' . . . having subdued and removed the sub-kings, Caedwalla took upon himself the supreme authority, and when he had held it for two years, at length impelled by love of the heavenly kingdom, he quitted it, and going to Rome ended his days there.' ³

We are told that after he had mounted the West Saxon throne he again attacked the province of the South Saxons, and that ' that province was reduced to more *grievous slavery*.' ⁴

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 15.

³ *Op. cit.* Ch. 12.

² *Op. cit.* Ch. 12.

⁴ *Op. cit.* Ch. 15.

Also, we read that Caedwalla took the Isle of Wight, which was then ‘entirely given over to idolatry’¹ . . . and by merciless slaughter *endeavoured to destroy all the inhabitants thereof, and to place in their stead people from his own province*, binding himself by a vow, though, it is said, he was not yet regenerated in Christ, to give the fourth part of the land and of the spoil to the Lord if he took the island. He fulfilled this vow by giving the same for the service of the Lord to Bishop Wilfrid, who happened at that time to have come thither from his own people.

‘Thus after this manner, when all the provinces of the Britons had received the faith of Christ, the Isle of Wight also received the same, yet because it was suffering under the affliction of a foreign subjection no man there received the office or see of a bishop before Daniel, who is now bishop of the West Saxons.’²

This account of Bede’s, however, is full of difficulties. Howarth was the first to point this out. I cannot do better than quote what he says *in extenso*. After remarking that Bede does not definitely say who Caedwalla was, he proceeds: ‘The use of the name “Gewissi” here is remarkable. As Mr. Plummer says, it does not occur in the Anglo-Saxon version of Bede, nor in any Saxon source, and Bede himself clearly regarded the word as obsolete in his own day, for he says elsewhere “the race of the West Saxons who in ancient times were called Gewissae.”’³ It survives in Celtic sources, both Welch and Irish, until several centuries later, and in the pseudo-Asser

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 16.

² *Op. cit.* Ch. 16.

³ *Op. cit.* Bk. III. Ch. 7.

it is treated as a Celtic name. . . . This shows that Bede derived the notice at first or second hand from a Welch source.

‘What is more remarkable (in fact most remarkable) is that the name Caedwalla is an impossible Saxon name, and is most certainly a Welch one ; so is that of his successor, and it makes it very difficult, or rather almost impossible, to accept the pedigree provided for him by the patriotic annals of Wessex, and which, like others from the same source, is very doubtful. The difficulty is much increased by other details of the story as told by Bede and others. Thus he is called a pagan, and he certainly acted like one, and it is only after his visit to Rome, when he had resigned his throne, that he is said to have been baptized. If he was a Saxon prince, how could he at this time have been a pagan, for all the Saxon principalities were at this time converted ? The same may be said of the British princes.’¹

The only exception was the Isle of Wight, which was evidently still pagan. Wulfhere of Mercia had conquered that island and given it to Ethelwalch, king of the South Saxons, but it had evidently remained untouched by Christianity, as far as the English inhabitants were concerned.

After remarking that the British Church was not treated as orthodox by the Roman Church, Howarth proceeds : ‘A good deal . . . may be fable, but it may have for its foundation the fact that Caedwalla of Wessex was deemed to be of Celtic, or partly of Celtic, blood. He may in fact have been of mixed blood, which would account for his brother being

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. pp. 130-131.

called Mul—*i.e.* “The Mule,” or Half-Breed. This might explain his Celtic name, and he may have used the period of anarchy existing in Wessex to make himself master of that kingdom once possessed by his people, and in fact to repeat the doings of Cadwaladar in earlier times in Northumbria. It is pretty certain that if he did so that the West Saxon writers of a later day would try to disguise the fact, and to do so effectually by the concoction of a sophisticated pedigree.’¹

What Howarth considers highly probable is, however, absolutely true. Caedwalla was a Briton on his father’s side, and there is no doubt but that his aim was to recover the sovereignty of the island for his race. That aim he all but succeeded in accomplishing.

Howarth has noticed that it seems to be implied by Bede that the great mass of the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight were Britons, and did not belong to the Jutish race.² But Howarth has not noticed that it was evidently the Jutish settlers who were massacred by Caedwalla, the Saxon names of the two martyred boys proves this; the Britons were evidently spared. Taken in conjunction with Bede’s previous statement, that ‘Caedwalla endeavoured to destroy all the inhabitants thereof, and to place in their stead people from his own province,’ it seems clear that while the British king massacred the enemies who had dispossessed his race, he spared the Britons,³ his own countrymen.

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 132.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 16, and Howarth, vol. ii. p. 136. Bede says, ‘Thus after this manner after all the provinces of the Britons had received the faith of Christ, the Isle of Wight also received the same.’

³ There is a difficulty in this passage. Were the British inhabitants of

Returning to Bede—whose omissions are sometimes very striking—in the chapter of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* where Caedwalla is first mentioned¹ he is abruptly introduced without any description whatever ; we just are given his name and are told absolutely nothing about him. It is only in a later chapter that we get the information that he was ‘ of the royal race of the Gewissae.’ Bede is also significantly silent as to Caedwalla’s conquest of Kent.²

Eddius, a contemporary authority, says : ‘ While Wilfrid was at work in Sussex there came to him a certain exile, or outlaw, of noble birth, from the wastes of Ciltine and Andred, who was named Caedwalla, and sought the friendship of Wilfrid, saying he was faithful to his doctrines and interests, and promised to act as his son.’³ Eddius tells us that Wilfrid helped Caedwalla with troops, and gave him money and advice. Shortly after this Caedwalla made his first attack on Sussex, in which he killed King Ethelwalch, who had been Wilfrid’s friend and patron when he was in trouble. Here, too, complete silence as to Caedwalla’s origin.

the I. of W. Christians ? It is probable that they were ; it is unlikely that the island would relapse into the heathendom of the hated invaders. They would be, of course, Celtic Christians. Against this Bede says that the island was entirely given over to idolatry, and that the Britons received the faith of Christ ; but then we have seen that he calls Caedwalla a pagan, *though he was a Christian*, and the ‘ given over to idolatry ’ can be understood of the Jutish settlers, who were evidently not all massacred. Bede had either imperfect information or is trying to disguise an unpleasant subject—probably both. Wilfrid, who was later given charge of the island, would certainly compel compliance with Roman usages from the Britons. The surviving Jutes became Christians. This is probably the true explanation and that Bede has loosely expressed himself. The whole subject would be a distasteful one to him.

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 12.

² This is discussed later on in this chapter.

³ Eddius, Ch. 42.

It will be necessary for us to go back to the year 633, that terrible year for the kingdom of Northumbria, when the British king Caedwalla overran the north of England from sea to sea and re-established the rule of the ancient British race. But in the following year, 634, King Oswald, 'a man beloved of God,' returned from exile, 'who advancing with an army, small indeed, but strengthened with the faith of Christ, the terrible leader of the Britons, with those immense forces which he boasted nothing could withstand, was killed in the place which is called in the English language Denisesburn.'¹

It has been assumed by most historians that Caedwalla was slain at the battle of Denisesburn; it was, however, not Caedwalla but his father, Cadvan, who met his death in that battle.

This view is against the commonly accepted opinion—it has been advanced by Skene—and there is little doubt but that it is correct. The evidence is almost overwhelming. The name of this battle, both in Nennius and the *Annales Cambriae*, is 'bellum Catscaul' (cath-is-gwaul)—battle within the wall. Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba*, a contemporary authority, thus describes it: 'On the very night following King Oswald, just as he had been instructed in the vision, advanced from his camp with a very much smaller army to battle against countless thousands; to whom, just as it was promised him, a favourable and easy victory was given by God, and King Catlon having been killed he returned a victor after the battle.'²

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 1.

² Adamnan, *Vita Columbae*, Bk. I. Ch. 1.

Three times in this chapter Catlon, who is referred to as 'King of the Britons' and as the enemy of Oswald, is mentioned by name. The writer who goes by the name of Nennius says, 'Oswald killed Catgublaun, King of the region of Gwenedota, in the battle of Catscaul, with great slaughter of his army.'¹

The *Annals of Ulster* notice the event thus: 'The battle of Cathloen, King of the Britons and of Anfrith.'

It will be noticed that all the Celtic sources refer to the King of the Britons slain by Oswald as 'Catlon,' 'Cathloen,' 'Catguollan,' and that of these authorities Adamnan and Nennius² are contemporary, or almost so, with the events they describe. Bede, too, in describing this battle does not give the name of the leader of the Britons who was slain by Oswald; he merely refers to him as 'infandus Brettonum dux.'³

The next link in the chain of evidence is found in the *Annales Cambriae*, where under the year 682 we read, 'There was a great mortality in Britain in which Catgualart son of Catguollaun died.'⁴ In the twelfth-century *Life of Oswald* there is a most remarkable passage dealing with these events. This *Life* was compiled in the year 1165⁵ by Reginald, a

¹ Nennius, ed. Mommsen, pp. 207-208.

² Adamnan succeeded in 679 to the chair of St. Columba; he was then fifty-five, so that he was born in 624. The first edition of the *History of the Britons*, which goes by the name of Nennius, was executed in the last quarter of the seventh century, and there may be an older form behind this.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 1.

⁴ The reading of the oldest MS. of the *Annales*, tenth, or beginning of eleventh century.

⁵ *Vita Oswaldi*, Ch. lv., *Rolls Symeon*, vol. i. p. 382.

monk of Durham ; it is, however, a very reliable piece of work, and what is of the greatest importance for our purpose is that the writer was acquainted with Celtic sources. He knows Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba*¹ and makes use of it in his own *Life of Oswald*. Reginald was not dependent on Bede or on Saxon sources for his information, but there is a considerable probability that he had access to other early Celtic documents besides Adamnan's *Life of St. Columba*.² The passage in this *Life of Oswald* dealing with King Cadvan (Catlon) and his son is of such importance that it is necessary to give it in full :

‘ Afterwards Cadvan, who was reigning on this side of the Humber, brought up Edwin, son of the holy Oswald's sister, along with Cadwallo his own son. Then when both of them were reigning, King Edwin conquered Cadwallo and pursued him into Armonica. Cadwallo then returning with a powerful army, first of all conquered Penda, King of the Mercians, and united him to himself. . . . This Cadwallo of whom we have spoken, when he had reigned forty-eight years, was buried at the gate of London, hard by the Church of St. Martin, in a tomb surmounted by a brazen statue mounted on a brazen horse. At length Cadwallader, whom the holy Bede calls Cadwalla, reigned in his stead ; he was the son of Cadwallo and the sister of Penda. Then when a grievous plague came, he fled into Armonica to King Alanus, nephew of Solomon.

¹ The whole of Chapter 42 is extracted almost word for word from Adamnan's *Life*.

² This is discussed later in this chapter.

But King Cadwallader went to Rome, never again to return.’¹

We have noticed that the *Annales Cambriae* state that ‘Catgualart son of Catguollaun died of the plague in the year 682,’ and we have seen that the *Life of Oswald* gives Catguollaun a reign of forty-eight years; that means that Catguollaun, the son of Cadvan, began to reign in the year 634.

But this is the year of the battle of Denisesburn, in which it is usually held he was killed. The fact that the son of Cadvan began his reign in the year of the battle of Denisesburn is proof that it was his father, Cadvan, who was killed in that engagement, since on his father’s death he would succeed to the kingdom. I am not aware that this agreement between the *Annales Cambriae* and the *Life of Oswald* has been noticed—it proves that it was Cadvan, father of the king known to Bede as Caedwalla, who was slain.

But the truth of this assertion can be still further proved. The *Annales Cambriae* say that the son of Cadvan died of the plague in the year 682; the truth of this statement is confirmed by Bede, who writes concerning the South Saxons as follows: ‘About the same time that this province had received the faith of Christ, a grievous pestilence was devastating many provinces of Britain.’² The South Saxons were converted to the Christian faith by Wilfrid in 681. Bede, it will be observed, gives no definite date, he simply says ‘about this time.’ We may therefore take it as practically certain that in

¹ *Vita Oswaldi*, Ch. ix., *Rolls Symeon*, pp. 345-346.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 14.

the year 682 King Caedwalla of the Britons, son of Cadvan, died of the plague—the agreement between all the authorities is complete. The twelfth century *Life* gives these kings their correct names—Cadvan the father, Cadwallon the son.

Now to return to the *Life*, that document informs us that Cadwallon had a son Cadwallader, and that this son's mother was a sister of Penda, King of Mercia ; it then adds, ' this Cadwallader is the same whom the holy Bede calls Caedwalla,' that is Caedwalla, King of Wessex.

In the year 682 we read in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Centwine (King of Wessex) drove the Brito-Welch as far as the sea. William of Malmesbury informs us that Centwine routed the Britons with ' dreadful slaughter,' but tells us that he gets his information from the Chronicles. Florence of Worcester repeats the same statement. Is it not very probable that Cadwallon, defeated in battle, and driven from his country, would take refuge in the kingdom of Mercia, whose king, Ethelred, was his wife's nephew ? London was at this time under Mercian rule ; there is, therefore, nothing improbable in the statement in the *Life of Oswald* that Cadwallon died and was buried in London. Cadwallader therefore, (Bede's Caedwalla, King of Wessex), was an exile from his native land, as Bede and Eddius both inform us. As a result of the invasion of his country by Centwine, his father had died a fugitive in the kingdom of Mercia.

We now see the full meaning of Eddius' statement that Wilfrid helped Cadwallader with men and gifts. Ethelred of Mercia was a relation of Cadwallader's,

and it would be natural for the royal exile to ask, and receive, assistance from him. Ethelred also was a staunch friend and supporter of Wilfrid's. Cadwallader evidently went to Wilfrid, after leaving Ethelred, probably with his recommendation, and it looks as if Eddius, in order to exaggerate Wilfrid's influence, has given him sole credit for helping the royal exile.

Bede's Caedwalla of Wessex therefore was of Celtic parentage on his father's side, and was no less a person than an exiled British king.

We have now seen what were the circumstances which led up to his sudden appearance in Sussex, and can understand why he should take advantage of the condition of the kingdom of Wessex in order to attack it.

In the genealogies of the kings of the various English kingdoms which are appended to Florence of Worcester's *Chronicle*, there appears in the pedigree of the Kings of Mercia a certain 'Cudwahl,' who is represented as a nephew of Penda, and it is certainly strange that the father of this 'Cudwahl' is called 'Cedwahl,' and is represented as a brother of Penda. Sir Henry Howarth has rightly suggested that the Saxon annalists would, if Caedwalla were a Briton, endeavour to hide the fact, and would not hesitate to manipulate his pedigree in order to achieve this purpose. Here we have in *Florence of Worcester* a nephew and a brother of Penda, bearing the names of Cadwallader, and his father Cadwallon, respectively, and it certainly looks as if the compiler of this genealogy has substituted Cadwallader's father's name instead of his mother's in order to give him an

English descent on the father's side. The evidence, however, in favour of Cadwallader (to give him his real name) being of Welch extraction is overwhelming and does not need the support of Florence. But it is interesting to note that what Howarth suggested has in all probability actually been done.

We are now in a position to understand Caedwalla, King of Wessex's wonderful career of conquest, and to appreciate its results. Let us follow that career under the guidance of Bede and William of Malmesbury.

William of Malmesbury tells us that Caedwalla by his active endeavours had aroused the animosity of the chief men of his country and was driven by a conspiracy into exile.¹ This would account for his being an exile some years after his father's death, but William gives us additional interesting information; he tells us that Caedwalla had drawn all the military population with him into exile. He had evidently taken refuge in the forests of Ciltine and Andred, and we are given to understand that from there he went to Wilfrid, who gave him help. We have seen that it is likely that Eddius is here indulging in one of his habitual exaggerations for the purpose of magnifying the influence of Wilfrid.

Ethelred of Mercia, Caedwalla's relative, would probably assist him, and he had evidently drawn a large following with him into exile. We are, however, distinctly told that Wilfrid assisted him. Caedwalla's first move was to come suddenly upon Ethelwalch, King of the South Saxons, at the head of an army, and to waste that province with cruel

¹ W. M., *Gesta Regum*, Bk. I. Ch. 34, *R.S.* vol. i. p. 33.

slaughter and devastation.¹ William of Malmesbury says that Ethelwalch felt the first effects of Caedwalla's fury since he had hazarded a battle, and adds that he was routed with all the forces he had collected. Caedwalla was expelled from Sussex, but almost immediately fell upon Wessex, which succumbed to his attack. No sooner was Caedwalla seated upon the throne of Wessex than he turned his attention to the surrounding kingdoms. William of Malmesbury tells us that 'he had an inextinguishable hatred against the South Saxons, and that he totally destroyed Edric, the successor of Ethelwalch, who dared to oppose him,'² and Bede says the province was reduced to grievous slavery.³

William of Malmesbury also informs us that Caedwalla 'nearly depopulated the Isle of Wight,' which had rebelled in confederacy with Mercia; he also gained repeated victories over the people of Kent.⁴ Florence of Worcester, who says that Caedwalla reduced Sussex to severe servitude, says that he and his brother Mull ravaged Kent in the year 686, the same year in which the depopulation of the Isle of Wight took place. William of Malmesbury gives details of this invasion. He says that 'Caedwalla and Mull, breathing an inextinguishable hatred against the people of Kent, made repeated attempts against the province.'⁵ They, however, put up a brave resistance, and at last, after many losses, they gained the victory, put Caedwalla to flight, and drove

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 15. ² W. M., *Gesta Regum*, Bk. I. Ch. 34.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 15.

⁴ W. M. *op. cit.* Mercia was evidently alarmed at Caedwalla's growing power.

⁵ *Op. cit.* Bk. I. Ch. 14.

his brother Mull into a little cottage which they surrounded ; they then set the building on fire and Mull perished amid the flames. This brought a severe punishment on the people of Kent, for Caedwalla again ravaged the kingdom. William of Malmesbury says that he did not retire from the province but repeatedly ravaged it.¹ The kingdom of Kent was in fact reduced to such a desperate condition that the throne was vacant six years. Bede, who is very silent about these events, has the significant statement ' that kings of doubtful title or foreign origin wasted the kingdom,'² and Florence of Worcester tells us that on the death of Edric, King of Kent, ' the kingdom was for some time dismembered by kings of doubtful pretensions or aliens.'³

It is all very significant, and it all agrees with the Celtic sources : the chain of evidence is complete, there is not a missing link.

Bede and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* place the two great events of the fateful year 685 side by side. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says, ' In this year Caedwalla began to strive for the kingdom, and in the same year King Ecgferth was slain by the north sea, and a great army with him.'

These two great blows delivered by the Celtic inhabitants of Britain against the English invaders might have resulted in a permanent transfer of power to the dispossessed Britons—as it was they shook the English power to its very foundations. There seems little doubt but that Caedwalla intended to repeat

¹ *Op. cit.* Bk. I. Ch. 15.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 26.

³ Flor. Wig., *sub anno* 686.

his grandfather's exploit of the year 633 and to attempt to wipe out the English power from sea to sea. The English kingdoms, however, were miraculously saved by an incident which reads more like romance than sober history. This fierce mysterious conqueror, after a short two years' reign, suddenly, at the height of his power, resigned his crown and went as a pilgrim to meet his death at Rome.

The seemingly unaccountable act may have been due to the influence of Wilfrid, who had assisted him in the time of his exile. One wonders what Wilfrid's feelings must have been when his protégé was at the flood-tide of his success! If Caedwalla had never gone to Rome the English inhabitants of Britain would undoubtedly have fared very ill. Under the year 689 the *Brut y Tywsogion* has these memorable words: 'In this year died Cadwallader the blessed, son of Cadwallon, son of Cadvan, King of the Britons, in Rome on the twelfth day of May, as Myrddin had prophesied to Gwrtbelyn Gwrthenenen. And from that time forth the Britons lost the crown of empire and the Saxons gained it.' These words are the literal truth; they are not fable due to the vivid Welch imagination; they sum up the final result of a great movement of the Celtic race against the invaders.

Caedwalla was succeeded by Ine, whom Florence of Worcester calls Caedwalla's brother, but about whose origin there hangs a doubt. He was certainly a Welchman: his name, as Howarth has pointed out, is a Celtic one.¹ To Ine, Caedwalla left the task of revenging the death of Mull, his brother. This

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 131.

meant another devastation of the kingdom of Kent. Bede is completely silent about this. William of Malmesbury, however, gives us details ; he tells us that Ine's first expedition was against the people of Kent. The inhabitants at first resisted, but finding their efforts unavailing they entered into negotiations with their conqueror and bargained for peace at a price of ' thirty thousand marks of gold.'¹ Ine accepted these terms and retired to his own country. This was in the year 694.

Both Florence of Worcester and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* notice this payment by the men of Kent as a price for the conclusion of peace with Ine, and they both say that it was because of the burning of Mull. William of Malmesbury is alone in telling us that Ine invaded and reduced the province of the East Angles to subjection. His words are important : ' Not only the men of Kent, but also the East Angles, bore the brunt of his hereditary hatred, all their nobility being first expelled, and afterwards routed in battle.'² When we turn to Ine's dealings with the neighbouring kingdom of the South Saxons we are told by Bede that ' he oppressed that province with the like affliction for many years, for which reason during all that time it could have no bishop of its own.'³ The Isle of Wight also, because ' it was suffering under the affliction of a foreign subjection,' ' had no bishop before Daniel '⁴—that is, not until about the year 709. The continual use of words such as ' aliens,' ' foreign subjection,' ' grievous servitude,' ' here-

¹ W. M., *Gesta Regum*, Bk. I. Ch. 35.

² *Ibid.* Bk. I. Ch. 35.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 15.

⁴ *Op. cit.* Ch. 16.

ditary and inextinguishable hatred,' by various writers in connection with the exploits of Caedwalla and Ine is surely most significant. But further light is shed on William of Malmesbury's assertion that Ine invaded and subjugated the kingdom of the East Angles. It is to be found in the *Life of St. Guthlac of Crowland*, by Felix—a contemporary document. In it we read that when Guthlac was in his retreat among the marshes of the Fen country at Crowland, 'On a certain night, when the man of God was engaged in contemplation and prayer, the noise and shouting of companies of men, as of an invading army, was heard on all sides—for in those days the Britons with cruel enmity laid waste the race of the English—and the man of God going out of his cell, and listening attentively, heard as it were an innumerable crowd of people, speaking in the British tongue which he had learned long before as a young man when in exile.'¹ This passage bears witness to the survival of a British population among the marshes of Crowland; it is one of the many evidences of the survival of the British in districts conquered by the Anglian invaders. But this passage is evidently also a reminiscence by a contemporary writer of Ine's invasion of East Anglia. This evidence of a Celtic invasion of England and of the survival of a British population among the marshes of Crowland is not affected by the question as to whether Guthlac was at Crowland or not at the time this incident is said to have occurred; but inasmuch as Florence of Worcester says that Guthlac went to Crowland in 699, and as Ine's invasion could not have been earlier

¹ *Vita Guthlaci*, by Felix, abr. in Capgr. vol. ii. p. 4, ed. Horstmann.

than 694, or more probably 695—and most probably was some years later¹—there is nothing unlikely in the fact here recorded that he was at Crowland during the time of the invasion.

Wessex had been conquered, and Kent, Sussex, and East Anglia reduced to abject subjection by these two Celtic leaders. Northumbria had suffered a severe defeat from the neighbouring Picts and never again regained her former power and position. Mercia was the one important kingdom which had escaped the ravages of the Celts ; and added to the horrors of the invasion would be the rising of the surviving British population in the Fen district, and other neighbourhoods where they still may have continued among the English, in support of their invading fellow-countrymen. This appears to be borne out by the statement just quoted from the *Life of Guthlac*.

NOTE ON THE TWELFTH-CENTURY 'LIFE OF OSWALD.'

The writer of the twelfth-century *Life* was acquainted with early Celtic sources ; he quotes Adamnan's *Life of Columba* ; in fact Chapter 42 of the *Life of Oswald* is extracted almost word for word from Adamnan. The writer of the *Life of Oswald* takes care to inform us that he has used various early sources ('diversarum textus historiarum per currendo translegimus'), *Rolls Symeon*, i. 329. A knowledge of Celtic sources seems to have been comparatively rare. Bede was unacquainted with Adamnan's *Life of Columba*

¹ Possibly as late as Coened's reign, 704-708. There were evidently several risings of the Britons about this time ; Ine's invasion would have a disturbing effect on the British population. (*Vide Felix*, par. 20.)

(Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 4), and there would be little interest in the documents of the Celtic Church among those who favoured Roman usages. There is a strong probability that this writer had access to other early Celtic documents besides the *Life of Columba*. His statements agree with the most reliable Celtic sources that have come down to us. Let us take them in order. The statement that Edwin conquered Cadwallo, and that he fled to Armonica, is supported both by Bede and the *Annales Cambriae*; the *Annales* record the 'obsessio Catguollaun in insula Glannauc'—*i.e.* Priestholm on the coast of Anglesey. Bede mentions that Edwin conquered the Mevanian Isles (Bk. II. Chs. 5 and 9). Armonica (not Amorica) is Arvon, a district in N. Wales. I have dealt with the length of Cadwalla's reign and his death of the plague, and shown how this is supported by both Celtic and Saxon sources. Then we have the statement that Cadwallader (the son, Bede's Caedwalla) fled into Armonica (Wales) to avoid the plague of which his father died. This also fits in with what we know from other sources. William of Malmesbury tells us that he was expelled by a conspiracy, so he must have been in Wales some time at least after his father's death. There has been a hopeless confusion between Armonica and Armorica (largely by modern writers). This King Alanus is mentioned in the *Life of St. Wenefreda* (abr. in Capgrave), a document which evidently incorporates some very early material.

It is very striking how the statements of the writer of the *Life of Oswald* are borne out by the best sources, Celtic and Saxon, so that when he makes the statements that Penda was merely Cadwalla's assistant at the battle of Haethfelth and was compelled by force to join him, and that Cadwallader's mother was Penda's sister, there is considerable ground for saying that he got his information from some Celtic source which has now been lost.

It is important, however, to stress the fact that all these statements in the *Life of Oswald* will stand, quite apart from Geoffrey of Monmouth. So that even if the writer knew

Geoffrey's work, and copied it, all it would prove would be that there is a great deal more truth in Geoffrey than has commonly been supposed.

The *Life of Oswald* was written in 1165, the work of Geoffrey was published not much before 1147. But it has been shown that the statements in the *Life* do not need the support of Geoffrey. I cannot refrain from remarking that the treatment meted out to Geoffrey by some writers has been quite too harsh. He is undoubtedly a romancer, but there is some truth among his romance. He certainly used Nennius, the value of whose work, thanks to the labours of Zimmer and Mommsen, is now admitted, and I am glad to see that Mr. Alfred Plummer says that there is no reason to doubt that Geoffrey used earlier material; Arnold throws doubt on the very existence of this in Geoffrey's work. (Plummer, *Churches in Britain before A.D. 1000*, vol. i. ch. 1.)

CHAPTER VI

THE CELTIC INFLUENCE IN NORTHUMBRIA— THE CELTIC REACTION UNDER ALDFRID

IT has been necessary to examine in detail the evidence for this last great rising of the Celtic race in an endeavour to regain the sovereignty of Britain, not only because the events of these memorable years have not been realized, but because they had a profound and far-reaching effect upon Celtic Christianity in England. Wessex, Kent, Sussex, East Anglia, all lay low under the heel of the conqueror; Northumbria, too, had received a blow from which she never recovered.

These two blows, one struck in the north and the other in the south, constituted probably the greatest challenge to Saxon supremacy since the beginning of the English invasions. The chief result, as far as the Celtic Church was concerned, was that it isolated the See of Canterbury from the rest of the English kingdoms, and reduced it to such a state of extreme weakness that it could not exert any appreciable influence in the affairs of the various kingdoms of the English.

Haddan and Stubbs have pointed out how this isolation of Canterbury is evidenced by the letter of

Aldhelm to the clergy of Wilfrid,¹ which most probably belongs to the period of Wilfrid's last expulsion.

The kingdom of Kent, in addition to the effects of repeated invasion, was further weakened by division. Under the year 692 the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says : ' There were then two kings in Kent, Wihtred and Webheard, and it was in this year that Beorhtwald was chosen Archbishop of Canterbury.' ² There had been therefore a vacancy of two years in the see, Theodore had died in 690, a fact which is eloquent testimony to the disturbed state of the country.

This condition of affairs in Kent at once had its effect on the position and prospects of those who favoured Roman usages in the north of England. As a result of Ecgfrid's active encouragement, Roman influence had largely increased in Northumbria ; now, as a result of his disastrous expedition against the Picts, and the events which followed Caedwalla's rise to power, that influence suffered a severe set-back.

Not only was Ecgfrid's successor, Aldfrid, a whole-hearted supporter of Celtic usages, but the Archbishop of Canterbury was prevented from effectively making his influence felt outside his own diocese, owing to the disturbed condition of affairs in Kent and the rest of England generally. This weakening of the influence of Canterbury becomes apparent immediately after the death of Ecgfrid. If any man was capable of making his influence felt that man was Theodore, yet even his strong hand could not maintain its hold over Northumbria after the events of the year 685. The pages of Bede are an eloquent

¹ Printed in H. and S. *Councils*, vol. iii. pp. 254-255.

² *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 692.

confirmation of this, since from 685-731, the year the *Historia Ecclesiastica* was finished, the See of Canterbury and Kentish affairs are hardly even mentioned in that work.

Theodore survived the battle of Nectansmere five years, and when, after a two years' vacancy, his successor Beorhtwald was appointed, the influence of Canterbury must have reached low-water mark, since the kingdom of Kent itself was divided between two kings.¹ The See of Canterbury never recovered the influence thus lost, and when once again Roman power became in the ascendant in the north of England that power was not exercised through the Archbishop of Canterbury, but through the Bishop of York, who was created a metropolitan and received the pallium from Rome. Thus after 685 the influence of Canterbury ceased to count in Northumbrian affairs. The death of Ecgfrid at Nectansmere gave Theodore an opportunity of interfering on Wilfrid's behalf, so that he might be restored to at least some of the possessions and dignities he had lost.

What the reason was which induced the Archbishop to exert himself on Wilfrid's behalf we do not know. Theodore was eighty-four years of age, and he knew that he was dying; 'he had acted in a masterful way, and had used to the full the opportunity given him by the personal hostility of Ecgfrid against Wilfrid. He had done what he thought necessary and right in the sub-division of Northumbria, and as Wilfrid opposed his scheme he had to go under.'² It was natural, now that an opportunity

¹ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 692.

² G. F. Browne, *Theodore and Wilfrith*; p. 169

presented itself, that Theodore should wish for a reconciliation. I cannot help thinking, however, that the wise and far-seeing Archbishop saw in the accession to power in Northumbria of a king with Celtic sympathies, and in the weakening of the English kingdoms by the events that were then being enacted, a grave danger that the Celtic power might once again be in the ascendant over the greater part of Britain ; if Wilfrid therefore, a strong man and the strongest supporter in England of the power of Rome, were restored to some of his possessions in Northumbria, he would be a powerful influence to stem the tide of rising Celtic feeling which might undo much of the work which Theodore had accomplished.

It seems very probable that this consideration may have strongly influenced Theodore in seeking to help forward Wilfrid's restoration ; at any rate, what is certain is, that the Archbishop sent for Wilfrid, that a reconciliation between them took place, and that as a result of this Theodore wrote letters to Aldfrid of Northumbria, Ethelred of Mercia, and the Abbess Ælfleda, requiring them to come to terms with Wilfrid. Ethelred of Mercia, we are told by Eddius, received Wilfrid freely, held him in the highest honour, and remained his friend to the end of his life ; Aldfrid, by the advice of Theodore, invited Wilfrid to go north.

What exactly happened as a result of this visit is by no means clear. Wilfrid was certainly restored to much of what he had lost, but to how much ? That is the question. As this incident in Wilfrid's life has been so confused, it will be well to first of

all give Eddius' actual words : ' King Aldfrid, in the second year of his reign, reverently invited our holy Bishop Wilfrid to come to him from his exile, according to the command of the Archbishop ; at first he granted him the monastery in Hexham with the possessions attached to it, and after some time, according to the judgment of the blessed Agatho, Bishop of the Apostolic See, and of the holy synod, his own bishopric in the city of York ; and restored to him the monastery of Ripon with its revenues, the intruding bishops being expelled.' ¹

Wilfrid's return to Northumbria resulted in continual quarrels between himself and Aldfrid. Eddius gives us three principal causes of these disputes. First, the spoliation of the Church of St. Peter, *i.e.* either Ripon or York ; Eddius does not say which. Lands had been taken away and not given back. Second, the monastery given to Wilfrid as his property had been made into an episcopal see. Third, Eddius says that Wilfrid was compelled to obey the decrees of Theodore, not the canonical decrees of his early time among them, nor those of his latest times, but those of his middle time when discord had arisen among us in Britain.²

That is, Wilfrid wished once again to be sole Bishop of the Northumbrians, and entirely to upset Theodore's division of the kingdom into separate dioceses.

Let us now examine Eddius' statements. As regards the first cause of trouble it seems practically certain that the Church of Ripon is meant. We know from Eddius that the lands of Cartmel in

¹ Eddius, Ch. 43.

² *Ibid.* Ch. 44.

Lancashire were granted by Ecgfrid to Wilfrid,¹ and the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* informs us that Cartmel was granted by the same king to the Church of Lindisfarne.² When Wilfrid incurred Ecgfrid's displeasure he appears to have taken possession of these estates and to have re-granted them to Lindisfarne.

As regards the second cause of trouble between Aldfrid and Wilfrid there is some difficulty. The monastery which had been given him as his property had been turned into an episcopal see. Forest Browne understands this to mean that on Wilfrid's appointment to York, John of Beverley received the bishopric of Hexham, which he retained until his translation to York.³ Howarth, on the other hand, argues that Ripon is meant, and that Eadhead retained the bishopric of Ripon after Wilfrid's appointment to York.⁴

Neither of these views seems correct. In regard to the first, Bede says : ' In the beginning of Aldfrid's reign Bishop Eata died, and was succeeded in the bishopric of the Church of Hagustald by the holy John.'⁵ Eddius also plainly states that Wilfrid was first of all restored to the monastery of Hexham, *with its possessions*.⁶ To this must be added the evidence of the records of the Priory of Hexham. Prior Richard of Hexham says, ' When the venerable Eata was dead and honourably buried in the Church of Hagustald, the holy John took upon himself his

¹ Eddius, Ch. 17.

² *Hist. de Sanc. Cuth.* Ch. 6, *Rolls Symeon*, vol. i. p. 200.

³ G. F. Browne, *Theodore and Wilfrith*, pp. 187-188.

⁴ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 183.

⁵ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 2.

⁶ Eddius, Ch. 43.

bishopric and presided over it for one year';¹ and in the list of bishops of Hexham which he gives in Chapter XIX. of his *History of the Church of Hexham*, John is also represented as having been bishop for only one year.

These three authorities, then, seem to be in agreement that, after Eata's death, John of Beverley succeeded to the bishopric of Hexham and held it only one year. Evidently then Wilfrid was restored to the bishopric of Hexham, and held it along with York until his expulsion. John was driven out, but, on Wilfrid's expulsion by Aldfrid, he returned to Hexham in the year 691. Bede tells us that he was ordained deacon by John in his nineteenth year;² this would be either in 691 or 692, so that there is nothing in Prior Richard's statement to contradict what Bede says.

As regards Ripon, it seems that Wilfrid was restored to that also. Howarth has suggested that Eddius was mistaken in saying this,³ but it is most unlikely that Eddius, a close personal friend of Wilfrid's, would fall into such a blunder. That there is a difficulty there is no denying. What does Eddius mean by saying that one of Wilfrid's monasteries had been turned into an episcopal see? It seems to me that the only clue to this riddle is, that Wilfrid was restored to the bishoprics of York and Hexham and to the monastery of Ripon, but that he did not receive back Hexham as it had been before his expulsion. He was indeed Bishop of Hexham, and as

¹ *Ric. Hagust*, Bk. I. Ch. 10, S.S. vol. i.

² Bede, *H.E.* Epilogue concerning himself. Appended to Ch. 24, Bk. V.

³ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 183.

such he enjoyed the revenues of the monastery : he was there, we may put it, as tenant for life, where before he had held the fee-simple—that was the trouble ; the revenues of Hexham were appropriated to the payment of the bishop, they were not Wilfrid's own to do what he liked with. Raine has suggested ¹ that it is probable that Wilfrid allowed John to act as Bishop of Hexham during this period, *i.e.* as Wilfrid's suffragan. Hexham, in fact, had been earmarked for a particular purpose—that was precisely what Wilfrid objected to.

Wilfrid, therefore, went back to Northumbria as Bishop of York and Hexham, and he also had given back to him the monastery of Ripon, and to accomplish this two bishops had been displaced. Had Wilfrid been wise he would not have asked for more ; he was determined, however, to completely upset Theodore's division and to have complete control of all Northumbria, Lindisfarne included.

After five years Aldfrid could stand Wilfrid no longer. He accordingly expelled him. Bosa then went back to York, and John of Beverley to Hexham, and Northumbria was again completely in sympathy with Celtic usages, both as regards her king and her bishops.

I shall refer to Bishop Bosa in another chapter ; ² here let us see what is known of John of Beverley. Bede is our earliest authority. In the *Historia Ecclesiastica* the names of five bishops are given who were inmates of the Abbess Hilda's monastery of Whitby ; John of Beverley's name appears fourth

¹ *Priory of Hexham*, Surtees Society, vol. i. p. 28.

² *Vide* Ch. XIII. *infra*.

on this list ; we are also informed in the same chapter that he was ordained Bishop of Hagustald.¹ That is all the information we have about John before he became Bishop of Hexham. It has been said that he was a pupil of Theodore's ; all the evidence, however, is against this.

In the chapter of Bede above quoted where John's name is mentioned, it is stated about Oftfor, the third on the list, ' that having applied himself to the reading and observance of the Scriptures in both the monasteries of the Abbess Hilda, at length being desirous to attain to greater perfection, he went into Kent to Archbishop Theodore of blessed memory, where also having spent some time in sacred studies, he resolved to go to Rome also, which in those days was esteemed a very salutary undertaking.'² This passage is of importance in determining the early history of John.

John of Beverley was one of the leading figures in the Church of his day ; he was, too, a Northumbrian, and it was he who had ordained Bede both deacon and priest ; yet here the latter hardly even mentions him, while he devotes a long paragraph to a comparatively unknown man, Oftfor, and, what is especially to be noticed, we are informed that Oftfor was a pupil of Archbishop Theodore. This is almost decisive against John ever having been a pupil of Theodore's, since if he had been, Bede would most certainly have said so in this chapter.

The ' Life ' of John of Beverley in the *Nova Legenda Angliae* says, ' When he was still at the age of boyhood he was instructed by Theodore, Arch-

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 23

² *Ibid.*

bishop of Canterbury,'¹ and it omits all reference to Whitby; while the anonymous 'Life' published by Leland in his *Collectanea* says that he was brought up under Theodore, who gave him the name of John.² It will thus be seen that the idea of John having been a pupil of Theodore's is an invention of later years, and finds no countenance in Bede.

This story has been built up upon a misrepresentation of a passage in Bede. John had been called to the bedside of a sick nun; he asked when the maiden had been let blood, and being told that it was on the fourth day of the moon, said, 'You did very unwisely and indiscreetly to let blood on the fourth day of the moon, for I remember Archbishop Theodore of blessed memory saying that blood-letting at that time was very dangerous. . . .'³ The meaning of this passage has been strained to mean that John was actually a pupil of Theodore's, regardless of what Bede says, and what he does not say, in Chapter 23, Bk. IV. of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*. John would certainly have been in contact with Theodore during one of the Archbishop's visits to the north, and in this way a personal reminiscence has been twisted to make John his pupil, in order to claim that he owed some of his education to Theodore. There is complete silence as to who consecrated John, and as to the exact time and place where that event took place, which is the more striking when we consider that we are given particulars of all previous Northumbrian appointments, and that he had been Bede's diocesan and had admitted him to both the diaconate

¹ *Nova Legenda*, vol. ii. 59, ed. Horstmann.

² Leland, *Collectanea*, iii. 100.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 3.

and the priesthood. Why then this silence over John ?

In all probability the consecrating prelate was Bosa of York, about whom Howarth says, ' It is very remarkable, considering the importance of the see and the length of time he held it, that Bede should have so little to say about him.' ¹

Aldfrid had received a Celtic education,² and he had strong Celtic sympathies ; he seems, on the vacancy occurring in Hexham, immediately to have taken matters into his own hands and to have appointed a bishop in sympathy with his own views, without even as much as consulting Theodore ; need we wonder if the aged Archbishop saw in Aldfrid's accession, and in the appointment and consecration of John of Beverley, the first results of the events of the year 685, and endeavoured to make one last effort to save the Northumbrian Church from definitely throwing in its lot with the Celtic Church. I cannot help thinking that in these circumstances the wise and far-seeing Archbishop saw in Wilfrid the one man who could be relied upon to try and stem the rising Celtic tide in the north of England.

Theodore would naturally insist that the two offending bishops, who had treated him in such a high-handed manner, should be removed from their sees. Aldfrid's appointment of John to Hexham, therefore, was in all probability the cause of Wilfrid's return to Northumbria, and his re-instatement in his former dignities.

John of Beverley was evidently a supporter of the

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. iii. p. 151.

² *Vide* Chapter XV. *infra*.

Celtic party, hence the desire when he became famous to find some connection between him and Theodore. The anonymous 'Life' of John,¹ before mentioned, has some interesting particulars regarding the foundation of Beverley. We are told that there was a little church there dedicated to St. John the Evangelist, which John acquired, and placed some monks in it. He rebuilt the presbytery of this church, and also an oratory dedicated to St. Martin to the south of it, where he settled some nuns. This church which John founded would, like all Celtic foundations, bear its founder's name, and it is interesting to see how the writers of a later age have turned the name of St. John of Beverley into St. John the Evangelist.

The mention of the nuns is interesting, and it points to Beverley having originally been founded as a mixed monastery, but this is the statement of a late authority, and it would not be wise to press it.

John of Beverley was one of the chief opponents of Wilfrid. William of Malmesbury says, 'Those men whom antiquity celebrates, as the most holy Theodore, Beorhtwald, John, Bosa, and also the Abbess Hilda, assailed with furious hatred Wilfrid, a man most approved of God. . . .'²

John of Beverley's Celtic sympathies are strikingly evinced in his appointing and consecrating his own successor in the See of York without reference to Canterbury.

When, after five years, Wilfrid was again expelled from Northumbria, Bosa and John returned to their

¹ *Vide* Anonymous 'Life' in Leland : *Collectanea*, iii. 100.

² W. M., *Gest. Pont.* iii. 107.

sees from which they had been driven out. Northumbria then became solidly Celtic in sympathies. When Wilfrid had been in exile eleven years an attempt was made to effect a reconciliation between King Aldfrid and himself. How this attempt originated we are not told. Howarth¹ suggests that Pope Sergius took the initiative, and that a letter of his to Ceolfrid, Abbot of Wearmouth, asking that a monk of his monastery should be sent to Rome in connection with certain ecclesiastical matters which would need consideration,² has reference to Wilfrid. This is certainly probable, but whoever initiated this attempt at reconciliation, it resulted in the holding of a great Synod for the purpose of discussing Wilfrid's affairs.

The proceedings of this Synod showed how firmly the Celtic party was entrenched in Northumbria.

This assembly met at a place called Onestrefelda, probably Austerfield near Bawtry. King Aldfrid was present, so was Beorhtwald, Archbishop of Canterbury, and it was attended by almost all the bishops of Britain.³ Having come together, the assembly sent messengers to request the presence of Wilfrid, and promised that they would redress his ancient wrongs if he would come to the Synod.

Wilfrid arrived ; but no sooner did he come on the scene than it was apparent how powerful was the opposition to him. Eddius says that there was a great altercation, and obstacles were raised, chiefly by the northern bishops and certain abbots. Then

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 196.

² H. and S. *Councils*, vol. iii. p. 249.

³ Eddius, Ch. 45.

Wilfrid was asked to consent to the decrees of Theodore concerning himself. Wilfrid, says Eddius, replied with humility that he would obey the decrees provided they complied with the canons. Meanwhile Aldfrid and his Witan were debating these questions by themselves, and one of the king's ministers slipped out of the council, and, disguising himself, came unobserved to Wilfrid. He told him that the council had determined to ruin him, and that they would try to take him in and defraud him. This put Wilfrid upon his guard. At last his enemies declared their intentions; they would so completely despoil him that they would not leave him the smallest bit of one small dwelling (*minimam quidam unius domumculi portiunculam*).¹

To this extreme severity, however, the king and the archbishop objected. They said that Wilfrid had committed no criminal offence, and that therefore it would be wrong to cast on the world so famous a man. Finally it was agreed to give him back the monastery of Ripon, together with the privileges it had obtained from the Pope, but on the following conditions: That he should remain peacefully in the monastery and not leave its precincts without the king's consent, nor perform any episcopal acts (*illic quietus consederet, septa monasteri absque licentia Regis non transmearet, nec aliquid sacerdotalis officii attingeret*).² These were certainly hard conditions, but we must remember that we have only Eddius' account of what took place.

Wilfrid now turned on his assailants. He recounted the services he had rendered to the Church

¹ *Op. cit.* Ch. 46.

² Eddius, Ch. 46.

during his episcopate. He had been the first after Augustine and his followers to oppose and eradicate the evil plant of the Scottish usages. He had procured the recognition of the true Easter, and the true form of tonsure in all Northumbria; he had introduced antiphonal chanting, and brought in the Benedictine rule.¹ Wilfrid declared emphatically that he would not submit to such treatment, he would appeal to Rome, 'For the wise Romans ought to know precisely for what fault you wish to degrade me before I shall consent to those terms with you alone.'²

Wilfrid could not have said anything more calculated to raise the ire of the assembly; it was the last straw, and was more than they would stand. On hearing Wilfrid's determination, says Eddius, 'The archbishop and the king said, "Now assuredly being in fault, he must be answered and condemned by us, because he has chosen their judgment before ours."'³ Wilfrid had refused the jurisdiction of the archbishop and of the bishops of his own country—he had appealed to a foreign tribunal. That was the offence, and what followed showed clearly how hostile to the Roman usages Northumbria was. The king offered to use his army to compel Wilfrid's submission; the bishops, however, were not prepared to go so far, and they pointed out that Wilfrid had come to the Synod under a safe-conduct.

The assembly then dispersed, and Wilfrid went to his friend, Ethelred of Mercia. The Northum-

¹ This whole account, it will be observed, is marked by Eddius' characteristic exaggeration for the purpose of glorifying Wilfrid; Scottish usages were not so easily eradicated.

² Eddius, Ch. 47.

³ *Ibid.*

brians, however, were determined to put an end to Roman interference. So strong was the Celtic feeling of the kingdom that they actually excommunicated Wilfrid's party,¹—'declaring us, and those who took part with us, to be separated from the congregation of the faithful; so greatly did they execrate our communion, that if any abbot or priest of ours, being asked by one of the faithful among the people, should bless with the sign of God's cross the refection placed before him, they declared that it must be thrown out of doors, and must be poured out, as if it had been offered to idols; and the dishes from which they had eaten, they ordered to be washed, as though polluted with dirt, before they might be touched by others.'²

This is striking evidence of the intense unpopularity of Wilfrid's attempts to root out Celtic observances; the hostility between the Celtic and Roman Churches was fanned into an open flame. Wilfrid's followers, and the party who favoured Roman influence in Northumbria, were treated as Bishop Dagan treated Archbishop Laurence, and as the British priests beyond the Severn treated the Saxon Christians. The Celtic party had swept all before it.

Towards the close of Aldfrid's reign Wilfrid returned to England, having obtained from Rome a decision in his favour. Armed with this, he sent

¹Wilfrid's adherents would comprise practically all those who favoured Roman influence in Northumbria. This excommunication of his adherents would have the effect of preventing Wearmouth and Jarrow from openly siding with Wilfrid or interfering on his behalf. We have seen that it is highly probable that Wearmouth was concerned in Wilfrid's case. The Synod of Austerfield would have the effect of isolating Roman usages within the walls of Wearmouth and Jarrow.

²Eddius, Ch. 47.

messengers to the king, asking permission to come into his presence, with letters of salutation from the Apostolic See, and judgment concerning his case made by Apostolic authority. Aldfrid named a day on which he would give an answer, and at the appointed time the messengers returned.

The king's reply was a blank refusal even to see Wilfrid, the two emissaries were told. 'My venerable brothers, ask from me what is needful for yourselves and it shall be granted freely out of my respect for you. In regard, however, to the affair of Wilfrid, do not ask me to do anything against what the kings, my ancestors, have done, what the archbishops with their advisers have determined, and what later I myself, in conjunction with the archbishop who was sent by the Apostolic See, with almost all the bishops of nearly all Britain, have decided. These things, as long as I live, I will maintain, notwithstanding the writings from the Apostolic See, as you call them' (*ut dicitis*).¹

In this determination Aldfrid died. His death created a new situation.

¹ Eddius, Ch. 58.

CHAPTER VII

THE CELTIC INFLUENCE IN NORTHUMBRIA — THE SYNOD ON THE NIDD

THE death of Aldfrid removed a powerful supporter of the Celtic party. That party was, however, largely in the ascendant in Northumbria. The king's refusal to receive Wilfrid in direct defiance of the commands of the Roman See had, it must be remembered, the complete support of his people. Eddius distinctly tells us that Aldfrid consulted with his counsellors before giving a reply to Wilfrid's two emissaries ;¹ and how strong was the feeling in favour of the Celtic policy which Aldfrid had adopted was clearly demonstrated in the events of the year succeeding his death. Aldfrid was illegitimate, and there seems to have been some doubt as to who would succeed him. He himself had carefully abstained from naming his successor, and on his deathbed had merely referred to ' whoever shall succeed me ' (Quicunque mihi successerit.)²

No sooner was the king dead than the throne was seized by an usurper named Eadulf. He must have had a considerable following since he besieged Berechfrith, the chief earldorman of the kingdom

¹ Eddius, Ch. 58.

² *Ibid*, Ch. 59.

and the guardian of Aldfrid's young son Osred, in the castle of Bamborough, where he and his royal charge had retreated.

To this new king Wilfrid sent messengers as to a friend, but the reception he received in that quarter was even more hostile than Aldfrid had accorded to him. Eddius tells us that, by the advice of his counsellors, Wilfrid received the answer that unless he departed from his kingdom within six days, orders would be given by the new king that all his dependants should be put to death wherever found.¹

Within two months Eadulf had been deposed, and Osred, Aldfrid's young son, mounted the throne. One of the first acts of the boy king and his advisers was to permit the holding of a Synod to decide the claims of Wilfrid; this had been ordered by the Pope, but Aldfrid and Eadulf had resolutely refused permission for it to assemble.

On the banks of the river Nidd the Synod assembled in the first year of Osred's reign, and Beorhtwald, the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had been deputed by Pope John to hold it, came north for the purpose.

The directions of Pope John with regard to the holding of this Synod must now be noticed. Archbishop Beorhtwald was to summon a Synod at which Wilfrid was to be present, and he was to cite Bosa, Bishop of York, and John, Bishop of Hexham, to attend its proceedings.² The directions which the archbishop had received in writing were, to give his own words: 'So that in my presence, although un-

¹ Eddius, Ch. 59.

² Letter of Pope John to Ethelred and Aldfrid. Haddan and Stubbs, *Councils*, vol. iii. p. 263.

worthy, and in the presence of all the bishops of this province assembled together, laying aside ancient enmity for the safety of their souls, they might be reconciled to the blessed Bishop Wilfrid in righteousness. For to these my brother bishops an option is granted in accordance with the two Apostolic judgments ; they may choose whichever they wish.

‘Either they may make a full and perfect peace with Bishop Wilfrid, and restore to him such parts of the churches which he formerly ruled, as wise men in conjunction with myself may decide, or if they should be unwilling to take this the best course, all must go together to the Apostolic See, and there let them be judged in a greater assembly.’¹

It is especially to be noted that the Synod was given very wide scope in coming to a decision, since they were only required to restore Wilfrid to part of the churches from which he had been ejected, and how much or how little he was to get was left to them in their wisdom to decide. To this Synod, to use Eddius’ words, ‘Beorhtwald, Archbishop of the Church of the Kentish men, and of almost all Britain, came from the south, having, in accordance with the precept of the Apostolic See, to invite with all diligence the king of the northern parts, with all his bishops and abbots, and the chief men of all his kingdom, to the place where the Synod was to be held, with regard to the case of the blessed Bishop Wilfrid.’²

Eddius gives us a list of those who were present : ‘The king with his chief men, and three of his bishops, and the abbots, and also the blessed Abbess

¹Eddius, Ch. 60.

²*Op. cit.*

Ælfleda, always the comforter, and the best adviser of the whole province. Archbishop Beorhtwald and Bishop Wilfrid also came at the same time on the same day.’¹

Two things in Eddius’ description of the constitution of this Synod deserve to be noticed. The first is his peculiar description of Beorhtwald as ‘Archbishop of the Kentish men and almost all Britain’; this is very different from Bede’s claim for Theodore to have been consecrated ‘Archbishop of the Church of the English,’² and shows how small was the influence of the See of Canterbury at this time, a fact which is borne out by the state of affairs disclosed in Aldhelm’s letter to the clergy of Wilfrid.³ The second point concerns the three northern bishops who were present at the Nidd Synod. It has been noticed that the Pope does not cite Eadfrid of Lindisfarne to appear, and it has been assumed that he was one of the *tres episcopi* referred to by Eddius.⁴ I cannot, however, help thinking that Eadfrid was not present at the Synod, and that the omission to cite him was intentional; in all probability the other bishop was Trumwine, who had been ejected from Ecgrid’s missionary Pictish bishopric after the disastrous defeat of Nectansmere. We know that after his flight he was an inmate of Whitby Abbey under the Abbess Ælfleda,⁵ and what more likely than that he should have accompanied her? Eadfrid of Lindisfarne, a Celtic monastic bishop, under the

¹ Eddius, Ch. 60.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 1.

³ H. and S. *Councils*, vol. iii. p. 254, and note on same.

⁴ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 223.

⁵ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 26.

rule of his abbot, would certainly not have been cited by the Pope to attend.¹

As soon as the Synod began its deliberations it became apparent that the opposition to Wilfrid was very strong ; had the result depended on the clergy alone he most certainly would have got no consideration whatever. Archbishop Beorhtwald was certainly no friend of Wilfrid's ; he had sent representatives to Rome with accusations against him.² The three northern bishops were, as we have seen, all in sympathy with Celtic usages.³ Eddius is very clear on this ; he says : ' But the bishops resisted ; they said, that which our predecessors Theodore, the archbishop sent from the Apostolic See, and Ecgfrid the king formerly determined, and afterwards in the plain which is called Austerfield, almost all the bishops of Britain in your most excellent presence, archbishop, and King Aldfrid, as well as we ourselves decreed, how could anyone have power to alter ? ' ⁴

Wilfrid's demands and the orders of the Apostolic See were at first met with a point-blank refusal. While matters hung in the balance an incident occurred which saved the situation for Wilfrid.

The Abbess Ælfleda informed the assembly that Aldfrid during his last illness had expressed an intention, if he lived, to restore Wilfrid, in obedience to the orders of the See of Rome, to the possessions and dignities of which he had been deprived.

¹ See my chapter on the Church of Lindisfarne.

² Eddius, Ch. 48.

³ *Vide* Chapters VI. *supra*, X. and XIII. *infra*.

⁴ Eddius, Ch. 60.

Berechfrith, the king's chief earldorman, then said that it was the wish of the king and his earldormen, that the commands of the Apostolic See and the wishes of King Aldfrid regarding Wilfrid should be obeyed. He then proceeded to tell the assembly a story to the following effect :

When he and Osred, Aldfrid's young son, were besieged in Bamborough by Eadulf, and were reduced to the direst straits, so that they were sheltering in the cleft of a rocky cliff, Berechfrith, having taken counsel with his chief men, they vowed that if God should restore the kingdom of his father to Osred they would fulfil the commands of the Roman See regarding Wilfrid.

Immediately, we are told, the minds of their enemies were changed, the besiegers became friendly, the gates were thrown open, and Osred was restored to the kingdom.

All this sounds very strange. What probably happened was that powerful influence was at work against Eadulf, even in the hour of his seeming victory : that at that very moment he was deposed by a conspiracy, and that his former supporters went over to the other side. In the divided state of the kingdom, it is obvious that the young king's advisers would seek to propitiate all the most powerful interests, so as to be assured of a solid backing for the new government.

Ælfleda and Wilfrid had powerful influence behind them, both inside and outside the kingdom ; it was therefore highly desirable to come to some agreement with them. The bishops were not inclined to yield, we are told that they took council in private among

themselves, then they were closeted alternately with the Abbess Ælfleda and the Archbishop.

Bede, who is very reticent over the whole business, tells us that after some contention on both sides, at length, by the common consent of all, Wilfrid was restored to the government of his own church.¹ That, in fact, was the result of the deliberations. Wilfrid was restored to his two monasteries of Ripon and Hexham ; he was not restored to either of the bishoprics of York or Hexham, which he had formerly held. The death of Bosa, however, soon created a vacancy in the See of York and then Wilfrid was given, not York—that went to a strong supporter of the Celtic party, John of Beverley—but the less important See of Hexham. The Synod on the Nidd showed how strong was the influence of the Celtic party, and its result left the power of that party practically unchanged ; the door was opened, however, to an increase of the Roman influence in the north, now that Wilfrid was firmly established in Hexham. The part that Hexham was to play in increasing this influence we shall see in the next chapter.

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 19.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CELTIC INFLUENCE IN NORTHUMBRIA.— THE REIGNS OF OSRED AND OSRIC—THE WORK OF BISHOP ACCA.

THE accession of Osred, save that Wilfrid was restored to the monastery and See of Hexham, left the Celtic influence practically unchanged in the north. Osred was only eight years of age at his accession, and he occupied the throne of Northumbria eleven years. Of his character we hear the most conflicting reports. We are told that he was a tyrant, and a libertine who spent his time debauching nuns. Bede notices his accession and the fact that he was slain in 716, otherwise he passes him by in silence.

In the letter, written some time between the years 744 to 747, by Boniface and five German bishops to Ethelbald, King of Mercia, urging him to reform, we read: 'The privileges of the churches in the kingdoms of the English remained inviolate and undamaged up to the time of Coelred, King of the Mercians, and of Osred, King of the Deirans and Bernicians';¹ and in the poem of Ethelwulf—*De Abbatibus*—we are told that Osred killed some of his nobility and drove others into the monastic life.²

¹ H. and S. *Councils*, vol. iii. p. 355.

² Carmen Ethelwulf, *De Abbatibus*, Ch. ii., *Rolls Symeon*, vol. i. p. 268

On the other hand we read that Osred gave the manor of Dalton in Yorkshire, where he had a royal villa, to the monastery of Beverley,¹ and the biographer of St. John of Beverley (Folcard) gives us an account of a certain occasion when King Osred was the guest of Bishop John.² Folcard actually speaks of Osred as 'a devout and faithful man,' and Bede, in his history of the abbots, notices an exchange of land between this king and Abbot Ceolfrid of Wearmouth.³ It is certainly most striking that Henry of Huntingdon, speaking of Coelred of Mercia—who was, like Osred, a protégé of Wilfrid's, and is coupled with the King of Northumbria by Boniface in his account of their vices, says: 'He was a most renowned king, inheriting the virtue of his grandfather and his father.'

Osred had been brought up under the care of Wilfrid, and his mother Cuthburga, a Wessex princess, who was evidently strongly imbued with that false asceticism of which Wilfrid was such a champion. She had separated from her husband Aldfrid during his lifetime,⁴ Florence of Worcester says for the love of God, and had founded a monastery at Wimborne before the year 705, leaving her young son to get on as best he might.

Howarth suggests that Wilfrid may have deliberately allowed his young protégé to grow up a reprobate, in revenge for all he had suffered at the hands of the Northumbrians. Is it not far more likely that

¹ Anonymous 'Life' of John of Beverley in Leland, *Collectanea*, vol. iii. p. 101.

² Folcard, *Vita* in Raine, *Hist. York* vol. i. 254-255, *R.S.*

³ Bede, *Hist. Abb.* Ch. 15.

⁴ Flor. Wig. *sub anno* 718.

the young king chafed under the rigid discipline which no doubt Wilfrid would have enforced, and that, as in so many cases, a too strict upbringing defeated its own ends ?

Wilfrid died in 709, and the Abbess Ælfleda, who had so ably pleaded for him, in 712.¹ The two strongest supporters of the Roman party being thus removed, the young king would naturally turn to the dominant Celtic party, whose views on life were not so strict. The poem of Ethelwulf, *De Abbatibus*, gives us further evidence of the strength of Celtic usages in Northumbria at this period.

When Eanmund, driven by Osred into the monastic life, founds his monastery, he sends to Lindisfarne, that stronghold of Celtic customs, for teachers, and not to Wearmouth, Jarrow, or Hexham, and he obtains the altar for his church direct from Ireland.²

Osred met a violent death in the year 716. Bede, the *Annals of Ulster* and *Tighernagh* merely report the fact of his death, but two MSS. of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* have the addition that he was slain 'to the south of the border.'³ Which border, the northern or southern, we have no means of knowing, but in all probability the northern frontier is meant. Ever since the disastrous defeat of Ecgfrid at Nectansmere the Picts had been very aggressive ; the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and the *Annals of Ulster* record a battle between the Northumbrians and the Picts in 710 ; Bede notices this under the year 711.⁴

¹ *Ann. Ult.* Also Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 24.

² *Carmen Ethelwulf*, Ch. vi., *Rolls Symeon*, vol. i. p. 270.

³ *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, sub anno 716.

⁴ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 24.

William of Malmesbury, a most reliable authority, says that Osred met his death by the treachery of his relations, who imagined they were doing right in killing him,¹ and it is not unlikely that they may have taken advantage of the ever present hostility of the Picts to compass this end.

Osred was succeeded on the throne of Northumbria by Coenred. We know nothing of him except that he reigned two years and died in 718.²

Coenred was succeeded by Osric, whom Symeon of Durham calls 'filius Alfridi regis,'³ and the Cambridge MSS. addition to this author's *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae* 'filius Alfridi.'⁴ Stubbs and Howarth identify this Osric with Osric, sub-king of the Hwiccas mentioned by Bede. Plummer dissents from this view. The arguments, however, advanced by Howarth in support of this view seem unanswerable. The Gloucester Chartulary tells us that in the fifth year of King Ethelred of Mercia—*i.e.* in 681—a Synod met at Ethcealchy, and at this Synod King Ethelred gave to two of his officials of noble rank in the province of the Hwiccas, viz. Osric and his brother Oswald, certain estates: 300 'tributarii' of land in Gloucestershire to Osric, where a monastery was founded, and 308 'cassati' to Oswald at Pershore.

There is extant a 'Life' of St. Kyneburga of Gloucester, sister to Osric. Kyneburga presided over this monastery for twenty-nine years, and when

¹ W. M., *Gesta Regum*, Bk. I. Ch. 53, *R.S.* vol. i.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 23.

³ S.D. *Hist. Dunelmensis Ecclesiae*, Ch. 13, *R.S.* vol. i. p. 39.

⁴ S.D. *Series Regum*, App. vol. ii. p. 390, *R.S.*

she died she was buried beside her brother Osric before the altar of St. Petronilla in the same monastery.¹ Leland saw this monument, and he says, 'at the foote of the tombe is this written on a wall : Osricus Rex, primus fundator hujus monasterii, 681.'² He distinctly identifies this Osric with Osric, King of the Northumbrians ; this, Howarth points out, is supported, if not proved, by the fact that he bears a Northumbrian name.³ It is also highly probable, as the same writer points out, that when Alchfrid, the sub-king of Deira, was deprived of his kingdom by his father Oswy, probably for rebellion, and was in all likelihood put to death, that his wife should fly for refuge to her brother Ethelred, King of Mercia, and that that king should promote his nephew to be sub-king of the Hwiccas.

'It seems to me,' says Howarth, 'that the induction is complete, that it fits in with all the facts, and I have no hesitation in accepting it as the only available solution of them.'⁴ To this evidence advanced by Howarth I would add some other facts not noticed by him. It is certainly a striking fact that in Osric's reign, in the year 721, that great Celtic stronghold, the monastery of Lindisfarne, was brought more into line with the customs of the Western Church ; for it was in the year 721, on the death of Bishop Eadfrid, that Ethelwold, the abbot of that monastery, was consecrated bishop, and thus the offices of bishop and abbot were held by one man.⁵

¹ *Hist. et Cart. Gl.* 109, R.S.

² Leland, *Itinerary*, ed. Toulmin Smith, ii. 60.

³ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 386. ⁴ *Op. cit.* pp. 387-388.

⁵ *Vide* my Chapter on the Church of Lindisfarne.

That this important step should have been taken under Osric, is strongly in support of the view that he was the son of the deprived Alchfrid. Osric's father had been the supporter and intimate friend of Wilfrid ; his uncle, Ethelred, under whom he reigned as sub-king, was a firm and faithful friend of that bishop. Is it not then extremely likely that Osric, with these associations, should be a supporter of Roman usages ? This fact is important in tracing the gradual return to power of those who favoured Roman usages, after the Celtic reaction of Aldfrid's reign.

We have seen that the strength of the Celtic party remained practically unimpaired during the reigns of Aldfrid's two successors, Osred and Coenred, both of whom were not unfriendly to it. One result of the Synod of the Nidd, however, had been to restore Wilfrid to the See of Hexham ; and although he died four years after, in 709, he was succeeded by a man after his own heart, Acca, a strong champion of the opinions his predecessor had so tenaciously held.

With John of Beverley, a favourer of Celtic usages, in York,¹ and with that great stronghold of Celtic customs, the monastery of Lindisfarne, still holding out, Hexham was the only part of Northumbria where Roman usages would obtain a hearing. In Hexham under Wilfrid and Acca Roman usages took firm root, and we may believe that it was the influence which arose at Hexham which finally led to the acceptance of those usages all over the north of England. Hexham under Wilfrid, and more especially

¹ *Vide* Chapter VI. *supra*.

under his successor Acca, became the centre of a powerful movement for the propagation of Roman influence, which was destined to have far-reaching effects.

Wilfrid only survived his restoration to Hexham four years : he died in 709. On his death, his priest, Acca, succeeded him in the bishopric. This Acca was in many ways a remarkable man, and the full extent of his influence on the history of the English Church at this period has hardly been recognized. It will be well, therefore, first of all to examine his antecedents.

Acca had received his education from those who were in sympathy with Celtic institutions, Bede informs us, and his exact words are worth noting, that ' Acca from his boyhood had been brought up and educated among the clergy of the most holy and beloved of God, Bosa, Bishop of York. Next coming to Bishop Wilfrid in the hope of a better way of life, he spent the rest of his life in obedience to him until the death of that bishop, and going also with him to Rome, he learned there many things of profit to the ordinances of the Holy Church which he could not have learned in his own country.' ¹

Acca had accompanied Wilfrid into exile on his second and third expulsions, he had gone with his master twice into Friesland,² and had twice accompanied him to Rome and had probably lived with him there for thirteen years. On his last journey back to England Wilfrid had been taken seriously ill at

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 20.

² On Wilfrid's last expulsion he stayed some time with Willibrord in Friesland, on his way to Rome.

Meaux ; for four days he lay unconscious. On regaining consciousness he had immediately asked for Acca, and had in private given him what might be his last instructions.

Acca was a whole-hearted and enthusiastic supporter of Roman usages ; he had been Wilfrid's most intimate and trusted friend, and the latter had expressed the wish that he should succeed him at Hexham. At the beginning of his episcopate all Northumbria, with the exception of his own diocese, was in the hands of those who did not look with favour on his views, and, as we have seen during Osred's reign and that of his successor Coenred, the pendulum swung still further to the side of those who supported Celtic usages. Acca, therefore, worked hard to strengthen and entrench Roman customs in his own diocese of Hexham, until the accession of Osric raised to the throne a more favourably disposed monarch.

The bishop had a difficult task before him. Rome was far distant from the north of England ; Ireland, on the other hand, was very near. Irish teachers, or those trained under their influence, were predominant in Northumbria ; all the monasteries were Celtic in sympathy, with the solitary exceptions of Wearmouth and Jarrow, erected during the reign of Ecgfrid, and Wilfrid's old monastery of Ripon. So much did Irish influence predominate, that even the most ardent supporters of Roman customs¹ were forced, if they wished to obtain the highest education possible, to seek it in Ireland ; they could not have obtained it elsewhere.

¹ *Vide* Chapter XV. *infra*.

It was apparent that if Roman customs were to prevail, and the English Church to be drawn into closer connection with the Apostolic See, that the education which had to be sought in Ireland must be provided in England, and that in monasteries which were not subject to the Celtic discipline. Within Acca's diocese were situated the two monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow. These monasteries observed the Benedictine rule, to introduce which they had been erected, and they became strongholds of the foreign influence, and of the most supreme importance to Acca in his efforts to spread the Roman usages in Northumbria.

Acca therefore set to work in his diocese of Hexham, and under his patronage Wearmouth and Jarrow became seats of learning and enlightenment, whose influence reached far beyond the shores of Britain. These two monasteries enabled Acca's clergy to receive an education removed from the dangerous environment of Celtic customs, which those who had been trained under Irish influence were not likely to despise. Hitherto the Celtic training of the English clergy, even of those who favoured the adoption of foreign usages, had been a great bar to those Englishmen like Wilfrid, who regarded his brother bishops in Celtic orders as outside the pale of the Catholic Church!¹ These clergy, while they would have liked to see a general adoption of Roman usages, yet were not prepared to consent to the excommunication of those who had

¹ According to Eddius, Wilfrid says that the Celtic bishops were schismatics : Quos nec Apostolica sedes in communionem recipit, neque eos qui schismaticis consentiunt. Eddius, Ch. 12.

trained them : they wished like Ceadda and Wini to be on good terms with both sides.

Acca, in addition to being a very learned man himself, was a great patron of learning and the arts, and he erected at Hexham a large and noble library.¹ Acca must always be remembered as the patron of Bede ; the great historian and his bishop were on the most affectionate terms. Most of Bede's theological works are dedicated to Acca, the ' Hymn on the Day of Judgment ' also was addressed to him, and the commentaries on St. Mark's and St. Luke's Gospels were written at his request.² It is extremely likely that Bede's commentaries were intended to be the text-books for the Northumbrian province, and that it is chiefly owing to Bishop Acca that we are indebted for their existence.³

Acca thus built up an educational system in his own diocese with the assistance of the monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow, in whose walls Bede, a man as learned as any Ireland had produced, was trained, and trained from the beginning in an atmosphere which was definitely anti-Celtic. To Acca and Tathbercht, Abbot of Ripon, we owe Eddius' *Life of Wilfrid*,⁴ and we shall see that there is good reason to think that the bishop was largely responsible for the existence of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Bede. The full significance of this encouragement of historical research by Acca we shall see later on.

Good as were the educational facilities provided by the exertions of Bishop Acca, he could not hope

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 20.

² Bede, *Opera*, ed. 1563, v. 2. Quoted by Raine, *S.S. Hexham*, vol. i. 33.

³ Raine, *Hexham*, vol. i. preface xxxii.

⁴ Eddius, Ch. 1.

that they would excel the great Celtic monastic schools in learning. In all branches of theological and secular learning, in the art of illumination, in sculpture and in metal work, the Celtic Church at this period was second to none ; in two things, however, that Church was vastly inferior to Rome—in architecture and in music. It is strange that a Church with such learning, and which could produce such gorgeous MSS. as the Book of Kells and the Gospels of Lindisfarne, should never have raised a church of any architectural note.

Here was a chance to exert a powerful influence in favour of Rome. Acca took it. He resolved that his diocese should be second to none in the splendour of its architecture and the beauty of its music.

Wilfrid had built a magnificent church at Hexham. Acca enriched the structure of this church with manifold adornments and marvellous workmanship. ' For he gave all diligence, which he does also to the present day, to procure relics of the blessed Apostles and martyrs of Christ from wheresoever he could, and to set up altars in their honour, setting apart for this purpose side-chapels within the walls of the same church ; besides which collecting with the greatest industry the histories of their martyrdom, together with other ecclesiastical writings, he erected there a very large and noble library ; likewise he most assiduously provided holy vessels and lamps, and other such like things as appertain to the adornment of the house of God.' ¹

Speaking of the buildings at Hexham, Symeon of

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 20.

Durham says : ' In that place the buildings are pre-eminent in height, breadth, and beauty.

' In this monastery the walls are decorated with various colours, and historical events are depicted thereon, just as the beforementioned Bishop Wilfrid ordained.

' In truth also the lord Acca, who afterwards governed the same place, adorned it with splendid decorations.' ¹

Under Acca the Church of Hexham must have become the most magnificent building in all England.

Aelred of Rievaulx sums up Acca's many activities in these words : ' He was an energetic man and magnificent both before God and before man ; he enlarged the Church of St. Andrew with all manner of decoration and wonderful building, he acquired relics of the Apostles and martyrs ; he formed a large library ; for the purpose of training his people he kept with him for long a " cantor " named Maban, a pupil of the successors of St. Gregory.' ²

This brings us to Acca's work in connection with church music. Both Bede and Richard of Hexham tell us about the work of this Maban in Northumbria, that Acca kept him twelve years, so that he might teach his clergy such music as they did not know, or had become corrupted through long use or through neglect.³ The Gregorian chant was not new to Northumbria, it had been taught by James the Deacon, and later a most distinguished authority on church music, no less a person than John, the Arch-

¹ S.D. *Hist. Regum*, R.S. vol. ii. p. 52.

² Aelred, *Miracula Sanctorum*, S.S. *Hexham*, vol. i. p. 217.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 20.

chanter of the Apostolic See, had come to Wearmouth at Benedict Biscop's invitation to teach his monks.¹ The use of the Gregorian tones, however, cannot have extended much beyond the confines of the two monasteries, which had been founded to encourage the Roman usages. Bede expressly tells us that Eddius, whom Wilfrid brought up from Kent, was the first after James the Deacon to teach singing in the churches of the Northumbrians.² John's lessons were committed to writing by the monks of Wearmouth, but although we are told that those who were interested in singing in the surrounding monasteries came in to hear him, and that he was also invited to teach in other places,³ the influence of his teaching cannot have extended much beyond the confines of Wearmouth. His stay was only of very short duration and can hardly have exceeded a year, since he came to England in 679 or 680 with Benedict and attended the Council of Hatfield, whose decrees he signed, evidently when on his way back to Rome.⁴

Jarrow at this time was not yet founded, and considering that six years later the Celtic-minded Aldfrid had ascended the throne, and also that from the year of the foundation of Wearmouth, Northumbria had been ruled by bishops of Celtic sympathies, with the exception of Wilfrid, for a few years in York and Hexham, it is unlikely that Roman usages would have been able to extend. We may take it, therefore, that the Roman method of chanting was almost extinct in Northumbria outside the monas-

¹ *Op. cit.* Bk. IV. Ch. 18, and *Hist. Abb.* Ch. 6.

² *Op. cit.* Bk. IV. Ch. 2.

³ *Op. cit.* Ch. 18.

⁴ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 18.

teries of Wearmouth, Jarrow, and Ripon, or Acca would not have found it necessary to bring Maban from Kent and keep him in the north for twelve years.

How thorough were his plans to eject everything Celtic and introduce everything Roman is clearly shown by the sculptured remains which have survived to our time in the district of Hexham. Acca must have brought over masons and stoneworkers, as Benedict Biscop had done at Wearmouth.¹ The evidence of the sculptured crosses in the neighbourhood of Hexham is most suggestive. Celtic art can be recognized at a glance: those wonderful interlacements are unique, be they on stone, in metal work, or in the illuminated pages of MSS. All over Ireland and Scotland we trace these Celtic interlacements; yet in Scotland there still remain a few monuments of Ninian's time, the Kirkmadrine crosses,² and these at once arrest our attention; their art is quite different from the surrounding mass of Celtic ornamentation, it is distinctly Roman in character. We find a similar contrast, equally striking, in the north of England. On all sides we see the familiar Celtic interlacements; and, side by side with the predominant Celtic art we see, at Hexham, other crosses of a type distinctly non-Celtic. In these monuments the Celtic interlacements are entirely absent, and what is more, they are closely associated with Acca's rule in Hexham. One of them is the great cross which is supposed to have marked

¹ Bede, *Hist. Abb.* Ch. 5.

² Figured in Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times* (Second Series), pp. 252-256.

the bishop's grave ;¹ a similar cross is in the east end of Hexham Church, and others are at Dilston and the Spital near Hexham.² These crosses stand alone in that they exhibit no trace whatever of Celtic influence—in this they are absolutely unique.

All the other crosses of this period remaining in the north of England exhibit traces of Celtic influence to a greater or less degree.

The decoration on one of the panels of Trumwine's cross at Abercorn³ very closely resembles the ornamentation on a cross at Kilmartin in Scotland :⁴ another panel of interlacements on the same cross is too distinctively Celtic to need comment. The north and south sides of Bewcastle cross are distinctly Celtic in character as regards their interlacements, and in that markedly Celtic characteristic of division into panels. Extremely Celtic in type are the crosses at Aycliffe⁵ near Darlington, while the great cross at Ruthwell⁶ exhibits the Celtic division into panels,⁷ and the inscription which it bears 'is written in an Irish form of script.'⁸

The remarks of Lethaby on the inscriptions on the Ruthwell and Bewcastle crosses are very much to the point here. After remarking on the Irish character

¹ Vide Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. iii. pp. 144-147, where the cross is figured and described ; also in G. F. Browne, *Theodore and Wilfrith*, pp. 257-261.

² These crosses are figured in Raine's *Hexham*, vol. i. Int. p. xxxiv. and vol. ii. Int. p. xxviii., Surtees Society.

³ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 110, where it is figured.

⁴ Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times* (Second Series), p. 128.

⁵ Raine's *Hexham*, vol. i. p. 38.

⁶ Anderson, pp. 232-246 (Second Series).

⁷ *Op. cit.* p. 98.

⁸ Lethaby, *Arch. Journal*, lxx. 147

of the writing, he says, 'they are of an entirely different character to the inscribed dedication stone of the church of Jarrow, a work of the Roman Church,' and he adds, 'the Ruthwell inscription is certainly in the Celtic tradition.'¹ Lethaby points out what he calls 'the remarkable coincidence regarding the contractions I.H.S., X.P.S. On the Ruthwell cross the Greek H is improperly represented by the letter h. Now on the Gospels from Bobbio in the National Library at Turin the letters are rendered in exactly the same way—I.h.S.'²

A curious form of the ampersand occurs on the Ruthwell cross which is very like that found in Irish MSS., including the Book of Kells.³

Whatever may be said as to the origin of some of the ornamentation on these crosses, the fact must be stressed that in all of them work of a Celtic character to a lesser or greater degree appears. In the Hexham examples, however, there is not the faintest trace of Celtic influence whatever, and they bear witness to the thoroughness with which Bishop Acca endeavoured to suppress everything savouring of the Celtic Church, even down to that distinctive kind of decoration known to us as Celtic ornamentation.

Acca was determined to use every endeavour to extend the Roman influence beyond his own diocese, but his efforts would perforce have to be exercised in a very restricted manner for a considerable time. With the King of Northumbria, Osred, favourably disposed towards the Celtic party, he would have to

¹ *Op. cit.*

² Lethaby, *Burlington Magazine*, vol. xxi. p. 145.

³ Lethaby, *Arch. Journal*, lxx. 147, note.

be careful not to push things too far, even in his own diocese.

Osred was slain, as we have seen, in the year 716, and probably about that date Acca began to take serious steps to weaken the Celtic influence in Northumbria. About Coenred, Osred's successor, we know next to nothing. There is ground, however, for thinking that Osred's death removed an obstacle from Acca's path.

In the year 716 a council was held at Clovesho in the south of England, at which the privilege of Wihtred to the churches of Kent was confirmed. At this council Acca was present,¹ and his signature is appended to its decrees. Haddan and Stubbs notice the fact of Acca, a Northumbrian bishop, being present at a Southumbrian Synod, and suggest the possibility of his having been sent on an embassy in connection with the death of Ethelred of Mercia, which took place in that year.² I cannot help thinking that Osred's death was the means of Acca's presence in the south of England, that his great purpose in going south was to get into touch with the Kentish ecclesiastical authorities, and that it was on this visit that he brought back Maban, whom he kept for twelve years to teach the Gregorian chant to his clergy.

Lindisfarne and York were still in the hands of the Celtic regime ; Acca, therefore, evidently conceived the idea of repeating Ecgfrid's disastrous experiment of attempting to plant missionary bishops, in communion with the See of Rome, in territory not only inhabited by Celtic Christians but actually

¹ *H. and S. Councils*, vol. iii. p. 300.

² *Op. cit.* p. 301.

outside the jurisdiction of the Northumbrian kingdom. Bede, in his description of the condition of England in the year 731, writes as follows : ‘ But in the province of the Northumbrians, where King Ceolwulf reigns, four bishops now preside : Wilfrid in the Church of York, Ethelwald in Lindisfarne, Acca in that of Hagustald, Pecthelm in that which is called “ the White House,” *which, as the number of the faithful has increased, has recently become an episcopal see, and has him for its first bishop.*’¹

I wonder has the full meaning of this passage ever been realized ? *Candida Casa* is the See of Whithern in Galloway, one of the oldest in Britain, founded by Ninian about the beginning of the fifth century, and with an unbroken Christianity of at least about a century and a half at the time Bede wrote, yet we are told that, as the number of the faithful has increased, a first bishop has been appointed to preside in the Church of Whithern.

Before we draw our conclusions let us glance at its history since Ninian’s time. The Christianity planted in Galloway was that of the Celtic Church, brought thither by the Irish colonists who, at the commencement of the sixth century, had begun to settle in Scotland. It is impossible to grasp the position of affairs in Galloway at the time of Bede’s death if we fail to realize how complete was the Irish colonisation of this part of Scotland. The first permanent settlement of the Irish in Scotland took place about the year 500. Aedan, who became king of these Scots in Britain in the year 574, was a most powerful and aggressive monarch. He made expe-

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 23.

ditions to the Orkneys and the Isle of Man. Next he turned his arms against the English invaders, alarmed at their growing power, and advanced as far as the neighbourhood of the present Carlisle. The victorious progress of the Scots, however, was checked at the battle of Degsaston; this place, Plummer considers, is in all probability Dawston in Liddesdale.¹ This took place in the year 603. The colonisation of southern Scotland by the Irish was, however, complete; this is abundantly proved by the place names. Bishop Reeves has pointed out² that while on the east coast of Scotland the parochial nomenclature is for the most part secular and derived from the Pictish age, on the west the names are usually ecclesiastical in their origin, combining with the prefix 'Kil' the name of some commemorated Irish saint. This striking fact of the place names has also been pointed out by T. S. Muir,³ who remarks: 'The complete colonisation of Galloway by the Irish is strikingly proved by the fact that in the whole parish (Kilcormac, near Castle Douglas) only two places retain names which are purely British.'

Oswy was probably the first English king to subdue the nations of the Picts and Scots, but this must have been subsequent to the battle of the Winwaed in 655; before that time, as Plummer remarks, 'with a partisan of Penda on the throne of Deira, with Bernicia open to invasion up to the very gate of his capital, his power must have been small.'⁴ Few of

¹ Plummer, *Bede*, vol. ii. p. 66.

² Reeves, 'Notice of the Isle of Sanda,' *Proc. R.I.A.* vol. viii. p. 132.

³ T. S. Muir, *Ecclesiological Notes on Some of the Islands of Scotland*, p. 214.

⁴ Plummer, *Bede*, vol. ii. p. 182.

the Northumbrians, however, settled in Galloway; the country was merely made tributary, and even in the place names they have left us hardly any trace of their ever having gained a footing there at all.

This condition of affairs only lasted for a brief period, for in 685 these Scots in Britain regained their freedom, which they still enjoyed in Bede's time. Thus I think that it is abundantly clear that Galloway, at Bede's death, was, on his own showing, independent of Northumbria; that it was Christian is also clear: it had the Christianity of the race who had completely colonised it—the Irish (Scots)—whose dominion had only been interrupted for the short space of, at the most, thirty years by the Northumbrian conquest. This conquest hardly influenced the district in question, since the conquerors (who had a better country and climate on the eastern shore) made no attempt to settle on the territory they had reduced to submission.¹

There is one other passage in which Bede refers to this See of Whithern. He says: ² ‘*Namque australes Picti . . . fidem veritatis acceperant, prae-dicante eis verbum Nynia episcopo reverentissimo et sanctissimo viro de natione Brettonum . . . Cuius sedem episcopatus sancti Martini episcopi nomine et ecclesia insignem, ubi ipse etiam corpore una cum plurimis sanctis requiescit, iam nunc Anglorum gens obtinet. Qui locus, ad provinciam Berniciorum pertinens, vulgo vocatur Ad Candidam Casam . . .*’

¹ T. S. Muir, *Ecclesiological Notes on Some of the Islands of Scotland*, p. 214.

² Bede *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 4.

In connection with this passage we first of all observe that Bede uses the word *locus*, not *regio*. This clearly shows that he is referring not to a district but only to the monastery of Whithern itself. Bede is most careful in his use of words, and had he meant more than the mere church itself he most certainly would have said *regio*. Again, the word *gens* is used. Bede always uses *natio* when he refers to people considered as a part of the whole nation. In Bede this word always means either the whole English nation made up of the various tribes, or it expresses the relationship of an individual to this united nation. *Gens* is always used by Bede in the sense of the various tribes which make up the *natio*, or to express the nationality of certain individuals in a *natio*. We cannot therefore in the above passage translate 'Anglorum gens' as the English nation, and it most certainly could not mean 'tribe of the Angles'; it therefore must be translated 'English people.' One other point requires notice: How are we to explain 'Ad provinciam Berniciorum pertinens'? Clearly it must be taken to mean that the Church of Whithern is subject to the ecclesiastical province of Bernicia,¹ and so we must translate the whole passage as follows: 'For the southern Picts

¹ I must not omit to point out that Bede in another chapter speaks of the 'provincia Berniciorum' (Bk. V. Ch. 14). This, however, does not affect the arguments here advanced. Bede in Bk. V. Ch. 23 speaks of the whole kingdom of Northumbria as an ecclesiastical province, and he refers to Whithern as a diocese in that province (Northumbria), the correct term. In Book III. Ch. 4 the reference to Whithern as a diocese in a province which was only portion of the ecclesiastical province then in existence is certainly strange, and it is another argument in favour of rejecting these words as an interpolation.

The case is quite different in Bk. V. Ch. 14. Here Bede is speaking of a sub-division of the Northumbrian kingdom, just as we should speak of an English county, and the use of 'provincia Berniciorum' here is therefore quite natural.

had received the true faith by the preaching of Bishop Nynias, a most reverend and holy man of the British nation, whose episcopal see, marked by a church named after St. Martin the bishop, (wherein Ninias himself and many other saints rest in the body) is now in the occupation of English people. The place (which is subject to the ecclesiastical province of Bernicia) is commonly called "The White House."'

Before we pass on to our conclusion, however, it should be noted that there seems to be very strong evidence in favour of rejecting the words 'Ad provinciam Berniciorum pertinens' in the above passage. The evidence in favour of rejection is : 1. In M, the best MS. of Bede, the words are a marginal addition 2. The use of the word Berniciorum is strange, and not what we should expect from Bede, whose care in the correct use of his words is, as I have pointed out, most striking. Bernicia had ceased to exist as a separate kingdom seventy-six years before Bede wrote, having become merged in Northumbria ; we should expect, therefore, to find the same word (the correct one) which he uses in the other passage where Whithern is referred to, viz. 'Northumbriorum.' 3. I have, I think, clearly shown that to assert that Northumbria had acquired the district of Galloway is contrary to all the evidence archaeological and historical ; not only this, but it would involve Bede in a contradiction. But Bede, be it noted, is in complete agreement with all the other evidence, for he distinctly says (*H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 26) that in the year 685 the Scots who were in Britain regained their freedom, which they still retained in his day ; so that if we understand him to mean that

Galloway is subject to Bernicia he is guilty of contradicting himself and the clear evidence, which is all the other way.

This seeming contradiction disappears if we reject the words 'Ad provinciam Berniciorum pertinens' as not being part of the original text.¹

I have shown, however, that the words, even if retained, are quite capable of another and a correct interpretation. 'Locus' means only the monastery, and the ecclesiastical province can only be meant in the same sense as Bede mentions the bishop of 'The White House' (Whithern) as in the province of the Northumbrians. What then do these two passages mean?

They mean that about the year 731 the great monastery of Whithern began to embrace the Roman usages, alone in the midst of a district predominantly Celtic and which had been Christian without a break for at least one hundred and fifty years. Bede's words, 'as the number of the faithful has recently increased,' cannot be understood in any other way.

We have here the spectacle of the appointment of a Roman bishop to a district Christian for a century and a half, appointed to shepherd the few converts he had been able to make from the surrounding solid mass of Celtic Christianity. Here we see the Celtic Church predominant, and side by side with the

¹ It is right that it should be pointed out that of the three best MSS. of Bede only M has these words as a marginal addition. Plummer observes that M and B are sister MSS., copies from the same original, which is older than any MS. we possess, and not far removed from Bede himself. C is a totally independent witness. 'Where M and B differ we cannot straightway award the palm to M; we must either decide by internal evidence or call in further external testimony.' (Plummer, *Bede*, vol. i. xcii.) It seems to me that in this case the external evidence is very strong in favour of rejection.

bishop of the Roman communion, the shepherd of a small aggressive minority, and this in the year 731 and on Bede's own showing.

How did these English come to this Celtic monastery so far in the midst of Celtic Christianity? We know not. 'But there is reason to believe that subsequent to the Synod of Whitby a very large emigration to Ireland took place of Englishmen who sympathised with the Irish.'¹ It is not unlikely that as a result of these emigrations Whithern may have received a large influx of English, and one result of this alteration in the nationality of a considerable proportion of the monastic community would be to render much easier the work of inducing them to accept the Roman claims.

Bishop Acca, as we shall see, evidently made use of this English influence in the monastery of Whithern, for he selected it as the seat of his new missionary bishopric among the Celtic Christians of Galloway. Whithern was not the only district outside Northumbria which received Acca's attentions. At the beginning of the eighth century renewed attempts were made to bring the Picts into the Roman fold, and it seems probable that these efforts had the support and encouragement of Acca. About 710, Naiton, King of the Picts, who had been

¹ Apart from the close intercourse between England and Ireland which existed long after the Synod of Whitby (see Ch. XV. *infra*) there were evidently considerable settlements in Ireland of Englishmen who favoured Irish views. The 'Life of Gerald' (Plummer, *Vitae Sanctorum Hiberniae*, vol. ii. p. 107) tells us of four brothers and a sister who went to Ireland because they were in sympathy with Colman's views. Their names were Gerald, Balan, Berikert, and Hucbritan, the sister was called Sigresia. The truth of this story is borne out by the churches which these exiles founded in Ireland, which still bear their names. These have been identified by Bishop Reeves. But on this subject see Olden's remarks, *The Church of Ireland*, pp. 85-87.

converted¹ to the Roman usages, sent messengers to Ceolfrid, Abbot of Wearmouth, asking him for a letter of exhortation, by means of which he might confute those who clung to the Celtic observances. Naiton's efforts evidently stirred up great opposition. We see a hint of this in Bede, who remarks: 'To the end that he might bring this to pass with more ease and the greater authority, he sought help from the Angles.'² The letter asked for was duly sent: when it arrived, Naiton is reported to have said, 'I indeed knew before that this was the true method of celebrating Easter, but now I so fully learn the reason for observing this time, that I seem to have known too little in every way concerning these matters before.'³

The result, says Bede, was that everywhere the erroneous computation of Easter was abolished and all the clergy received the Roman tonsure. This, however, is a great exaggeration. Naiton's reforms aroused great opposition. The great Columban monasteries in his kingdom—and they must have comprised the great majority of the Pictish clergy—resolutely refused to comply. In the year 717 Naiton expelled the Columban clergy from his kingdom.⁴ This, no doubt, was because they clung to their Celtic usages. Plummer thinks that they were expelled for refusing to adopt the Roman Easter and tonsure; he, however, overlooks the fact that the monks of Iona, with the other monasteries subject to them, adopted these in 716.⁵ Refusal to adopt

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 21.

² *Op. cit.*

³ *Op. cit.*

⁴ *Annals of Tighernagh, sub anno 717.*

⁵ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 22.

the Roman Easter and tonsure can hardly therefore have been the reason for their expulsion. It looks as if Naiton, with the help and approval of Acca and his friends in Northumbria, was trying to completely alter the usages of the Pictish Church, and, not content with the proper observance of Easter and the Roman tonsure, was determined that monasteries, architecture, and education should be based on the Roman model. Naiton's request for masons to build a church after the Roman manner¹ seems to hint at this. No doubt he had heard of Wilfrid's and Acca's buildings, which must have excited his wonder and admiration.

Some years after he had expelled the Celtic clergy Naiton himself was tonsured, probably involuntarily; two years afterwards he was thrown into prison by his rival, Drust, but he ultimately recovered a portion of his kingdom. The very next year, however, he suffered a severe defeat at the hands of Aengus, King of Fortrenn.²

The *Irish Annals* record at this time several battles among the Picts, and it is not unlikely that the unpopularity of Naiton's reforms may have had something to do with this state of civil war. In thus setting up a rival episcopate in the midst of a Celtic population who repudiated his authority, Acca was playing with fire. Ever since Ecgfrid's devastation of Ireland, and the disastrous defeat at Nectansmere, the Pictish menace had been an ever present danger to Northumbria. Acca's attempt therefore to establish a missionary see among the Celts of Galloway was sure to be a highly dangerous undertaking. The

¹ *Op. cit.* Ch. 21.

² *Ann. Ult., sub anno 728.*

full effects of Ecgfrid's defeat upon the kingdom of Northumbria have hardly been realized. How much English territory, if any, was annexed by the Picts as a result of the battle we have no means of knowing ; it is probable, however, that the boundary was pushed somewhat to the south of the Firth of Forth. Trumwine's see was situated almost on the boundary of the English territory, and the district beyond had never been actually occupied by the Northumbrians ;¹ there would therefore have been no necessity for the permanent evacuation of Abercorn if the boundary had remained precisely the same as before.

During Aldfrid's reign the Northumbrians suffered another severe defeat at the hands of the Picts. Bede barely mentions this reverse. In the narrative of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* it is entirely passed over ; in the chronological summary, however, there is the following entry under the year 698 : ' Berctred, the general of the Northumbrian king, was slain by the Picts.'² Florence of Worcester and Symeon of Durham are completely silent ; William of Malmesbury, however, gives us further valuable information, he says of Aldfrid : ' Nevertheless he did not rule over the same extent of territory as his father and brother, for the Picts, insolently profiting by their recent victory, and attacking the Angles who had become indolent through long peace, had curtailed their boundaries on the north.'³ This information given us by William of Malmesbury exactly fits in

¹ *Vide* Chapter III. *supra*.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 24.

³ W.M., *Gesta Regum, R.S.* vol. i. p. 58.

with the battle mentioned by Bede and by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.¹

The Irish authorities notice this battle. The *Annals of Ulster* say under the year 697 :² ‘ a battle between Saxons and Picts, in which fell Bernith, who was called Brectrid.’ William of Malmesbury’s account of what occurred is supported by still further evidence. In the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* printed by Arnold in the Rolls edition of Symeon, there is a description of the boundaries of the diocese of Lindisfarne. This is a most valuable and ancient authority ; it was used by Symeon of Durham, who calls it ‘ the charter roll of the church, which shows the ancient munificence of kings and various persons of religion towards the saint.’³ The earliest edition in which this document has come down to us was at least one hundred and fifty years old when Symeon used it. We are therefore pretty safe in assuming that the boundary of Lindisfarne on the north, as set out in this document, was the actual boundary then existing of the kingdom of Northumbria. Edmund’s expedition into Scotland had just taken place before the last entry (which refers to that event and the visit of the king to St. Cuthbert’s shrine) was made in the document.

The territories of the kingdom of Northumbria, therefore, we might expect to extend far beyond the Tweed, towards its ancient limits in Ecgfrid’s days, Yet what do we find ? The boundary is given as ‘ That land on the other side of the Tweed, from the

¹ The *A.-S. Chronicle* notices this battle and the slaying of Berctred, whom it calls Beort ; it gives the date wrongly—699.

² From 487-1013 the *Ulster Annals* antedate events by one year ; 698 therefore is the true date.

³ S.D., *R.S.* vol. i. p. 72.

place where the river Edra rises on the North, as far as that place where it falls into the Tweed, and all that land which lies between that river Edra and the other river which is called Leder towards the West, and the whole country which extends from the eastern side of that river which is called Leder as far as that place where it falls into the river Tweed towards the South.’¹ The river Edra is the White Adder, the Leder is the Leader Water in Berwickshire. The Northumbrian boundary therefore in the middle of the tenth century did not include more than the present county of Berwick or extend beyond the Lammermuir Hills ; and we may be certain that it extended no further during the two centuries preceding Athelstan and Edmund’s successes.

In the year 711 Bede, in the chronological summary at the end of his *History*, notices another battle with the Picts. Under that year we read : ‘ The earldorman Berctrid fought against the Picts.’² Florence of Worcester adds that Berctrid was victorious. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* gives particulars of the district where this engagement took place : the entry is most interesting. It runs : ‘ The earldorman Beorhtfrith fought against the Picts between Haefe and Caere.’ This second place is Carraw, it is situated on the Roman Wall some seven or eight miles to the north-west of Hexham ; it was a residence at one time of the priors of Hexham and is mentioned several times in the official documents of the Priory.³ Haefe I cannot identify.

¹ S.D., R.S. vol. i. p. 199.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 24.

³ *Black Book of Hexham*, Surtees Society *Hexham*, vol. ii. pp. 15-16 ; also charters in same volume, pp. 84 and 113.

We see therefore how real the Pictish menace was in the first half of the eighth century, when their armies had actually advanced into the heart of Northumbria. This time they were thrown back ; they still however, as we have seen, retained the territory they had taken from Aldfrid.

The *Annals of Ulster* notice this battle : ‘ A slaughter of the Picts in Magh Manonn by the Saxons, where Finnguine, sone of Deileroth, was untimely slain.’

CHAPTER IX

THE CELTIC OPPOSITION TO ROMAN INFLUENCE IN NORTHUMBRIA DURING THE REIGN OF CEOLWULF.

WE are now in a position to understand the exact position of affairs in Northumbria at the accession of Ceolwulf, who assumed the government of the kingdom in the year 729.

Acca's labours on behalf of the Roman Communion had achieved a considerable measure of success. Although he could not hope to rival Ireland in educational facilities, yet he had, by the establishment of first-rate schools and the collection of a magnificent library, enabled his people to receive a good education in their own country, free from the disturbing influence of the Celtic Church. This was of especial importance, since before that time, with the exception of Wearmouth, Jarrow, and Wilfrid's monastery of Ripon, all education in Northumbria was in the hands of monasteries under the Celtic discipline. Acca also by the magnificence of his church buildings, and the beauty of the Gregorian music, was enabled to exercise a most powerful influence in favour of the Church whose cause he so ardently supported : since in every age magnificent

architecture and musical services beautifully rendered will always make a powerful appeal.

The advent of a Bishop of Hexham favourably disposed towards Rome meant also, as we have seen, the widening of the influence of Wearmouth and Jarrow, and Acca made full use of these two monasteries in the furtherance of his designs. One of those trained from his youth under this purely Roman influence was the great historian Bede, and it is most important that we should note that most of his works were written for his diocesan, Bishop Acca.

But not only had Acca stirred up powerful opposition in his own country by reviving Ecgfrid's ill-fated policy of meddling with the Celtic Church outside the territory of the English, he aroused the suspicion and hostility of both the Scots and Picts, who not only would fear for their ecclesiastical usages, but would be apprehensive of a further attack on their independence. Matters were further complicated owing to the intense opposition to the introduction of Roman customs among the Picts, which had resulted in the expulsion of the Columban clergy from those Pictish territories which were subject to King Nectan.¹ This would array the whole powerful community of Iona and its subject monasteries against the Northumbrian influence.

In a period of about thirty years immediately succeeding Ecgfrid's devastation of Ireland there are no less than fourteen entries relating to English affairs in the *Annals of Ulster*; from 735 to 800 there is only one entry, while in the period of over fifty years preceding Ecgfrid's Irish expedition, the English

¹ *Ann. Tigh.*, sub anno 717.

entries number only about two. This is striking evidence of the importance attached to Northumbrian events at this period by Irish ecclesiastics, and of the fact that the events of the opening years of Ceolwulf's reign were connected with a determined attack on all Celtic ecclesiastical usages.

Two other facts must be noticed before we pass on. The first is that Bede twice refers to the danger from the Pictish frontier, and their incursions into Northumbrian territory ;¹ the second is that Pecthelm, Acca's missionary Bishop of Whithern, was brought from Wessex, the first southerner to be a bishop in the north.

It shows the strength of Celtic feeling at this time that the Roman party should seek a man from outside Northumbria for this position, and it is significant that he came from Wessex, where since the time of Caedwalla Roman influence had been predominant, and that he had been trained under Aldhelm,² who had done so much to spread that influence in his own province. The accession of Ceolwulf must have been extremely unacceptable to the Roman party in Northumbria, since, like his predecessor Aldfrid, he had received his education in Ireland and was evidently strongly Irish in his sympathies. The *Irish Annals* give Ceolwulf an Irish name: the *Annals of Ulster* call him 'Echaid,' those of *Tighernach* 'Echdach.' Aldfrid, who spent many years in Ireland and was Irish on his mother's side, is the only other instance of an English king being thus referred to ; there is therefore ground for saying that

¹ Bede, *Epistola ad Egbertum*.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 18.

Ceolwulf, like Aldfrid, had an intimate connection with Ireland.

Just at the beginning of Ceolwulf's reign, or shortly before his accession, the missionary diocese of Whithern had been founded, and those who favoured Roman usages may well have feared the result of the accession of a king with Celtic sympathies. We have seen that Bede and Eddius both wrote at the request and with the encouragement of Bishop Acca.

The work of Eddius is a panegyric of Wilfrid and his Roman policy ; the works of Bede were, as we have seen, largely written to aid his bishop in his educational work. Was this work now to suffer a set-back owing to the accession of a new king who was out of sympathy with the movement ? In these circumstances we may well believe that Acca would use every means to bring Ceolwulf to his way of thinking.

In 729 that king ascended the throne ; in 731 Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* was published, after having been previously sent to Ceolwulf for his inspection. We are therefore forced to the conclusion that we owe this great work to the entreaties of Bishop Acca, and that it was written with the object of influencing a Celtic-minded king in favour of a Roman policy.

Shortly after the publication of the *Historia Ecclesiastica*—in fact in the very year it was published—King Ceolwulf was seized, imprisoned, and forcibly tonsured. Acca also was driven from his bishopric, and never regained it.¹ As these events are of the

¹ Bede, *H.E. Continuatio*.

utmost importance it will be well to give the exact words of the original authorities. There is a very cryptic passage at the end of Bede's *History*; referring to Ceolwulf, he says, 'both the beginning and the course of whose reign have superabounded with so many and so great commotions of adverse events, that what ought to be written concerning these things, or what will be the end of each of them, cannot yet be known.'¹ And in the *Continuation*, under the year 731, we read: 'King Ceolwulf was taken prisoner, and tonsured, and sent back to his kingdom. Bishop Acca was driven from his see.'

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Florence of Worcester mention under the year 733 that Bishop Acca was driven from his see; Prior Richard of Hexham, however, has some interesting additions. He says: 'In the year of the Incarnation of our Lord 732, and in the fourth year of the reign of Ceolwulf, and in the twenty-fourth year of his episcopate he was driven out. By the pressure of what necessity he was driven out, or whither he went for shelter, I have not found written. Nevertheless there are those who say that at that time he began the episcopal See of Candida Casa and made it ready.'²

The Irish authorities notice these events. The *Annals of Ulster* say: 'The entry into religion of Echaid son of Cuidin, King of the Saxons, and he was put in fetters.'³ *Tighernagh* has: 'The entry into religion of Echdach the son of Cuidin, the Saxon king, and his putting under restraint.'⁴

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 23.

² *Richard of Hexham*, Surtees Society, ed. Raine, vol. i. pp. 34-35.

³ *Ann. Ulster*, sub anno 730.

⁴ *Ann. Tigh.*, sub anno 731.

Let us now examine these statements in detail. There is no doubt that Ceolwulf was violently seized, imprisoned, and placed in fetters, and that while in confinement he was forcibly tonsured. A determined attempt was made to drive him from the throne and into monastic life. This attempt was unsuccessful, for Ceolwulf was 'sent back to his kingdom.' There seems little doubt but that these events were connected with the attempts of the Roman party, led by Acca, not only to increase their power in Northumbria, but also to annex the neighbouring territories of the Scots and Picts. Whether the king was taken prisoner during an inroad of the Picts, or whether the anti-Celtic party among his subjects forcibly seized him to get him out of the way, we have no means of knowing. Possibly the two may have acted in concert. 'Sent back to his kingdom' would seem to point to his having been taken out of Northumbria, but the point cannot be pressed; all that seems certain is that as a result of the machinations of those who favoured Roman influence, there was a determined attempt to remove him from the throne.

Next we read that Bishop Acca was driven from his see. It is important to note that he was forcibly ejected, and did not resign. The *Continuatio Baedae* uses the word 'fugatus,' as does Richard of Hexham; and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Florence of Worcester, and Richard of Hexham all say that he was driven out. Acca never was restored to his bishopric, although he lived until 740.¹ Acca had in some way become mixed up with the intrigues of the Roman

¹ Symeon of Durham, *Historia Regum*, Ch. 36, *R.S.* vol. ii.

party against the king, or, being the head of that party, he may have been marked out for special punishment. There seems no doubt that Ceolwulf's imprisonment and Acca's deposition are closely connected: the bishop was evidently considered a dangerous person, and as such the king would not permit him to hold his bishopric. Raine rightly says that from all we are told of Acca it is impossible to suspect him of any misdemeanour, and that 'if he had left Hexham in disgrace he would not surely have been regarded as a saint, and with so much veneration, and the brethren of the monastery would not have allowed his bones to rest within their walls.'¹

All this is very true. Richard of Hexham is getting near the truth when he connects Acca's leaving Hexham with the See of Candida Casa. This see was already founded when Acca was driven out, so that he cannot have gone there as bishop after his expulsion, but it seems almost certain that it owed its origin largely to his endeavours. The Scottish authorities definitely connect Acca with Candida Casa; in the Kalendar of Dempster we read under the date of 6th August: 'In Galloway the day of "Blessed Acta," Bishop of Candida Casa'; in that of Camerarius under 16th January: 'Blessed Accas, Actas, Arcas, Bishop of Hexham in England and of Candida Casa in Scotland.'² This, taken in conjunction with all the other evidence, seems to prove conclusively that Acca was the real founder of Candida Casa. Richard of Hexham is therefore correct in connecting Acca's name with Whithern,

¹ Raine's *Hexham*, vol. i. 35.

² Forbes, *Kalendars of Scottish Saints*, p. 261.

but wrong in attributing his connection with that see to the period subsequent to his expulsion from Hexham.

The foundation of the missionary See of Candida Casa had however some connection with Acca's expulsion, and here Richard was right, since it was one of many acts of aggression against the Celtic Church which ultimately roused the opposition which led to his downfall. We have seen that it is highly probable that Bede's history, largely owed its origin to Acca's endeavours to influence King Coelwulf in favour of Roman customs.

Let us now gather up the evidence for this. The influence of Canterbury in Northumbria had always been very weak and intermittent: an examination of Bede's *History* will serve to bring this out very clearly. In the last three books of this work, comprising eighty-six chapters, and covering a period from the arrival of Aidan to the year 731, there are only fourteen chapters which are in any way concerned with the affairs of the southern diocese.

In the period before Theodore's arrival in England—if we except the forged letter of Pope Vitalian to Oswy¹—we have a short list of appointments, a notice of the death of Paulinus, and the information that Eadbald, King of Kent, was the first to order the idols in his kingdom to be destroyed. That is all. Then coming to the period of Theodore's administration, after an account of his appointment and first visitation, we have the destruction of Rochester noted, and Theodore's appointment to that diocese,

¹ H. and S. vol. iii. p. 110.

his appointments in the north of England, a notice of the Synods of Hertford and Haethfelth, and of the peace made by Theodore's efforts between Ecgfrid of Northumbria and Ethelred of Mercia. A notice of the death of Hlothere of Kent, and of the anarchy in that kingdom, follows; then comes the disastrous year 685: after that there is almost complete silence; and during the period of forty-six years from 685 to 731 we have just a bare half-dozen notices, and Archbishop Beorthwald, who held the See of Canterbury for forty-one years, is barely mentioned.

The truth is that the influence of Canterbury in the north of England, never very strong, was completely shattered by the events of the year 685. After that year the northern kingdom went her own way; with anarchy in Kent, and the Celtic-minded Aldfrid ruling in Northumbria, the influence acquired by Theodore would be well-nigh wiped out, except in the Roman foundations of Wearmouth and Jarrow, and Wilfrid's monastery of Ripon. The name of Augustine in these northern regions would be almost unknown or forgotten; the close Irish connection and the predominant influence of Celtic Christianity would have this result, and it might well be considered necessary that Bede should write a history of Northumbria which should show a king of Irish education how much he owed to the See of Rome.

Bede's work is a history of the 'gens Anglorum'—the 'race' (not nation) of the Angles. It is the history of the Northumbrian kingdom, and was written with the express purpose of showing the

connection between the Augustinian mission and that kingdom, then in danger of being forgotten.¹

Bede, in his list of his own writings, refers to the *History* as of our island and race.² He slightly touches on other matters, but his concern is with Northumbria: the history of other kingdoms, even if he knew them, was not of importance for his purpose. When we consider the isolation of Northumbria from the See of Canterbury, the strength of the Celtic influence in that kingdom, together with Acca's various efforts to weaken and break that influence, we see how the explanation just given of the events of Ceolwulf's reign is the only one that can be given. No other will fit in with the evidence, no other will explain the difficulties, which historians from the time of Prior Richard of Hexham have seen but have been unable to account for.

Ceolwulf returned to his kingdom, which must still have been in a very disturbed condition. The Celtic party had indeed gained the upper hand, but the

¹ The use of the word 'gens' in the title of the *Historia Ecclesiastica* is no exception to Bede's invariable rule. It is the history of Northumbria, the chief Angle kingdom, of which Mercia was an off-shoot. The other kingdoms (Saxons and Jutes) hardly enter in except in connection with the history of Bede's own province. Thus the Canterbury mission is brought in for the sole purpose of showing that Northumbria owed its Christianity to a Roman missionary. The interpolated chapter in Bede's *History* (Bk. III. 29)—the one which deals with Oswy's professed correspondence with Rome over Wighard's appointment (*Vide* Note on Ch. II. *supra*)—is striking evidence of the straits to which the Roman party were put to prove some connection between Northumbria and the Canterbury mission. One of Howarth's remarks on this chapter is particularly to the point in this connection: 'If the letter is genuine, the name of Oswy has been introduced into it at a later time, by Bede, or one of his copiers (whose account of this particular time is so thin and apparently diplomatic), for the purpose of trying to make out that the attachment of Northumbria, and in the greater part of Britain, to the Roman party (to which he himself belonged), was at that time much stronger than it was' (*Golden Age*, Int. cxxv). Thus he brought to light in Northumbria the half-forgotten history of the Augustinian mission.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 24.

influence of those who wished the Roman usages to be adopted must have greatly increased owing to Acca's labours, and become very powerful, and a force to be reckoned with.

In 734 Acca's bishopric was filled up by the appointment of Frithubert. In 737 Ceolwulf abdicated, and entered the monastic life.¹ We may well believe that a highly cultivated and scholarly man, such as we know him to have been, would be weary of the incessant tumults of his kingdom, and would gladly embrace the quiet and seclusion offered by the religious life. Ceolwulf retired, but, faithful to the last to that Celtic Church in which he had been brought up, he entered that stronghold of Celtic usages, the monastery of Lindisfarne.² He did not go to Wearmouth or Jarrow ; still less, as so many of the kings of Wessex had done, did he end his days in Rome.

Before he retired from the government of his kingdom, however, an event of the first importance in the history of England had happened. Wilfrid of York, a pupil of Hilda's monastery of Whitby, the nominee of John of Beverley and a supporter of the Celtic party, resigned his see in the year 732, and was succeeded by Ecgbert, a brother of Ceolwulf's successor, Eadbert, on the throne of Northumbria. Wilfrid survived his resignation thirteen years, dying in 745.³ He is highly spoken of by Alcuin ; we can therefore only attribute his resignation to the growing power of those who favoured the Roman influence.

¹ Bede, *H.E. Continuatō*.

² Symeon of Durham, *Hist. Dun. Ecc.* Bk. II. Ch. 1, vol. i. p. 52, *R.S.*

³ *Continuatō Baedae*.

Egbert had been to Rome, there he had received deacon's orders, and shortly after his elevation to the See of York he obtained the pallium from Rome. This was the greatest step yet taken towards bringing Northumbria into real contact with the rest of the Western Church. In place of a shadowy and intermittent authority, exercised at a long distance through the Archbishop of Canterbury, the See of Rome was now in direct communication with the north of England in the person of the metropolitan of York, who derived his authority direct from the Roman See, and was not in any way subordinate to the bishop of another kingdom.

The dignity of Northumbria was thus increased, together with the authority of the Roman See. York and Hexham were now brought into subjection to the Roman power ; Lindisfarne alone still remained to a great extent outside the Roman influence. The history of Lindisfarne, however, is of such absorbing interest that it will require a separate chapter to do it justice.

NOTE

It is only to be expected that Bede should be very reticent about the affairs of Ceolwulf's reign ; it would have been unwise of him not to exercise discretion, especially when it is remembered what was the fate of his diocesan, Bishop Acca.

CHAPTER X

THE CHURCH OF LINDISFARNE FROM THE YEAR 664 TO THE NORMAN CONQUEST

THE Synod of Whitby left the position of the monastery of Lindisfarne absolutely unchanged. That great Celtic foundation was permitted to go its own way without interference, and to all intents and purposes remained outside the jurisdiction of the province of Northumbria.

The Church of Lindisfarne was an off-shoot of the great monastery of Iona, and as such its discipline was modelled on that of the mother Church. It will be sufficient for me to give Dr. Fowler's admirable summary of the peculiarities of the Celtic monastic system : ' With regard to discipline, each monastery with its dependent houses appears to have had a rule of its own. These rules had a general resemblance in the most important points. The abbot was the head of each monastic family, including the daughter houses, which were governed by local heads under the abbot. Sometimes the abbot was a bishop, but usually a priest, with one or more bishops subject to him as members of the community, but performing episcopal functions and treated with honour and deference as bishops. Even abbesses had such episcopal chaplains subject to their authority. The

system was one of monastic territorial jurisdiction, and not one of diocesan episcopacy, though episcopacy was always held to be essential to the very being of a church.' ¹

How fully the Celtic Church recognized the three-fold ministry is plainly illustrated in the case of Columba himself. We read in Adamnan of a certain bishop who came to Iona from Munster : ' So far as he could he concealed himself out of humility, so that no one should know him for a bishop, but for all that the fact could not be hidden from the saint. So on another Lord's Day he was bidden by the saint to make Christ's Body, as is customary ; he called for the saint, as if they were two priests, to break the Bread of the Lord along with him, but the saint straightway going towards the altar, and suddenly gazing in his face, addressed him in these words : " The blessing of Christ be on thee, brother ; break this bread thyself alone, as is the custom of bishops : we know now that a bishop thou art." ' ²

' Taking this chapter with Ch. 36 and with II. 1, nothing can be plainer than that St. Columba fully recognized the three distinct orders of bishop, priest, and deacon, and considered that the proper function of a bishop was to confer Holy Orders, and that a bishop or priest could celebrate, while a deacon could only provide the elements for the celebration, and, moreover, that he considered the greatest veneration to be due to the episcopal order as higher than his own.' ³

¹ Adamnan, *Vita S. Columbae*, ed. Fowler, Int. p. 36.

² Adamnan, *Vita S. Columbae*, Bk. I. Ch. 44.

³ Fowler, *Adamnan*, p. 208.

Aidan, Finan, and Colman, all derived their authority from Iona and were subordinate to the abbot of that monastery. This is clearly shown by Colman's actions after the Synod of Whitby. Bede says that he went back to Iona to arrange with his own people what he ought to do in these matters.¹ In other words, he went to Iona to receive the orders of his abbot. 'When Colman had gone back to his own country, Tuda, the servant of Christ, was made Bishop of the Northumbrians in his place, having been instructed and ordained bishop among the southern Scots, having also the crown of the ecclesiastical tonsure according to the custom of that province, and observing the Catholic rule with regard to the time of Easter.' Then Bede continues: 'Therefore the most revered and gentle Eata, who was abbot in the monastery of Melrose, was appointed to be head of the community who preferred to remain in the Church of Lindisfarne, upon the departure of the Scots. And indeed the king dearly loved this Bishop Colman for the wisdom that was in him.'²

This whole chapter of Bede should be carefully noted. Tuda did not come into Northumbria after Colman's departure: he was evidently working there before the Synod of Whitby. He was ordained among the southern Scots, and was therefore not subject to the authority of Iona; he and Colman therefore were evidently working side by side in Northumbria at the time of the Synod: two bishops in the same district, but under (if we may use such a term) different diocesans—a striking illustration of the peculiar system of the Celtic Church. Tuda,

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 26.

² *Op. cit.*

when Colman left, was appointed Bishop of the Northumbrians, not of the Church of Lindisfarne ; that church, as we shall see, still for a time evidently remained in the ' *parochia* ' of the monastery of Iona.

There must have been from the time of Aidan considerable numbers of Celtic non-diocesan bishops in the north of England ; indeed there is strong documentary evidence for their presence in Northumbria at this time. Bede says : ' From that time more every day began to come into Britain from the region of the Scots, and with great devotion preached the word of faith to those provinces of the English in which Oswald reigned ; and those of them who had received episcopal rank ministered the grace of baptism to the believers.' ¹ And Eddius makes Wilfrid say, ' For there are here in Britain many bishops, none of whom it becomes me to accuse, though I know of a truth that they are either Quartodecimans like the British, and like the Irish, or else have been ordained by them, whom the Apostolic See receives not to Communion, nor does it receive those who are in agreement with schismatics.' ² Besides these incidents, we have the case of Tuda already noticed. Aidan, Finan, and Colman, therefore, were only three out of the many bishops working in the north of England at this time.

Eata was appointed Abbot of Lindisfarne, and we are told that this was an especial favour granted by Oswy to Colman. But what would be the favour in Oswy consenting to appoint a man who would reverse the customs so dear to Colman ? What Oswy did was this : he consented to allow Lindisfarne to re-

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. 3.

² Eddius, Ch. 12.

main outside the jurisdiction of Northumbria and to maintain its own peculiar customs, and at the request of Colman he appointed over the brethren who remained, Eata, one of Aidan's favourite pupils, and such a strong supporter of the Celtic party that only three years previously he had left Ripon rather than adopt the Roman Easter and tonsure. This was Oswy's parting gift to Bishop Colman whom he so loved.

But there is additional evidence for saying that Lindisfarne remained outside the Northumbrian Church and under Celtic discipline. In Bede's *Vita Cuthberti* we read: '*Let no man wonder that in this island of Lindisfarne, small as it is, we have spoken of a bishop's seat (as we did above) and now of a settlement of monks and an abbot, for of a truth it is so. For one and the same dwelling of the servants of God contains both these together, or rather contains none but monks. For Aidan, who was the first bishop of the place, was a monk, and was always accustomed to lead the monastic life with all his company.*

*'So from his time up to this day, all the bishops of that place exercise the episcopal office on the understanding that the monastery is under the control of the abbot, chosen by themselves, with the advice of the brethren, and that all priests, deacons, cantors, lectors, and all the other ecclesiastical ranks, including the bishop himself, observe the monastic rule in all things.'*¹

This is a most remarkable passage. Here we have it distinctly stated that from the time of Aidan down to Bede's own day, the Church of Lindisfarne was governed by abbots, to whose jurisdiction the bishops

¹ Bede, *Vita Cuthberti*, Ch. 16.

were subject. That Bede is describing something which was strange to him is apparent from his assurance that it is really true that in this small island were both abbot, monastic community, and bishop. There is a passage in Eddius which throws more light on this subject. On Wilfrid's expulsion from Northumbria he tells us Theodore consecrated three bishops in his place—and the expression he uses is a very peculiar one : ‘ Three bishops procured elsewhere, and not from among the subjects of that province.’ Taken in conjunction with what has already been said, the meaning of this is clear. Eddius' invective is largely directed against Eata, the ruler of that great Celtic stronghold which had remained outside the jurisdiction of the province of Northumbria, and had retained not only its peculiar constitution but even, for some time at least, the Celtic observance of Easter.

Eata, who took over the government of the Church of Lindisfarne, was, as we have seen, an enthusiastic and uncompromising supporter of Celtic usages ; he was Abbot of Melrose at the time of his appointment to Lindisfarne, and these two monasteries continued to be held together at least down to the death of Bede. Only three years before the Synod of Whitby, Eata had given up the monastery of Ripon sooner than adopt the Roman Easter ; under him Celtic usages were safe at Lindisfarne, and the events which immediately succeeded the Synod of Whitby rendered the position of that monastery even more secure.

Wilfrid's absence from England and the consecration of Ceadda to the See of York meant the return to power of the Celtic party, which King Oswy had

never really deserted, and with the Celtic party once more in the ascendant in Northumbria, Lindisfarne would be safe from interference. For fourteen years Eata governed the Church of Lindisfarne as abbot ; then in 678, when Wilfrid was expelled, that great administrator, Theodore, saw his chance. He consecrated three bishops for Northumbria : Bosa, a monk of Hilda's monastery, was appointed to Wilfrid's bishopric of York (*i.e.* Bishop of Deira) ; Eadhead to Lindsay, which had been conquered by Ecgfrid in 675 ; and Eata, Abbot of Lindisfarne, was persuaded by Theodore to receive consecration from him, and was given the oversight of the province of the Bernicians.¹ Eata still remained Celtic abbot of his two monasteries of Lindisfarne and Melrose,² and he now became through Theodore's act the abbot of yet a third—the monastery of Hexham.

But while Theodore refrained from interfering with the Celtic monastic system, and while he actually added a third monastery to those already held by Eata, he was using the Celtic system as a bridge to diocesan episcopacy, and in addition was extending his authority over the Celtic Church. Eata was now not only Abbot of Lindisfarne and Melrose, but by accepting the abbacy of Hexham, and consecration at Theodore's hands, became a suffragan of the Archbishop of Canterbury : his case was, in fact, a similar one to that of Cedd, who was Bishop of the East Saxons, and held in addition the monastery of Lastingham in Yorkshire.³ Eata's additional ap-

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 12.

² *Op. cit.* Bk. IV. Ch. 27. *Vita Cuthberti*, Ch. 16.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 23.

pointment meant as regards Theodore the extension of the influence of the See of Canterbury over all Bernicia. There seems little doubt but that even the Celtic Easter continued to be observed at Lindisfarne for some time after the Synod of Whitby; Eata's consecration by Theodore would of course mean the abandonment of that custom, and it is probable that the change to the Roman Easter at Lindisfarne took place about this time.

Eata, on the other hand, had not lost in dignity: on the contrary he had gained. He now ruled all Bernicia. This was undoubtedly one of the greatest acts of Theodore's diplomacy, when the Abbot of Lindisfarne, the chief ecclesiastic in the north of England, submitted to his authority. Bede, who imperfectly understood the Celtic system, says of Eata, 'he having his episcopal chair in the Church of Hexham or in that of Lindisfarne';¹ but Eata, as has been said, was not bishop of the united dioceses of Lindisfarne and Hexham: he was abbot of these two monasteries, but he was also a bishop who owed allegiance to Theodore of Canterbury. Richard of Hexham expresses the truth far more closely when he says that Theodore 'ordained . . . Eata for Hexham, and at the same time for Lindisfarne, both of which he ruled conjointly for three years.'² Eata in all probability placed provosts over the monastery of Hexham and continued himself to reside in Lindisfarne. Raine remarks: 'There is, however, no evidence to show that any bishop took up his residence at Hexham before 681. The presumption is

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 12.

² *Ric. Hagust*, Bk. I. Ch. 8.

that Eata during the three preceding years would cling to Lindisfarne, of which he was the abbot, where his influence would be strongest, and where from his connection with Aidan he would be greatly revered and honoured.' ¹ The same writer has remarked concerning the three Northumbrian bishops consecrated by Theodore in 678: 'Of these three we may conjecture that Eata was intended to be the chief, and to have the pall, if the papal consent could be secured.' ²

In 681 Theodore still further developed his plan for the increase of the episcopate: he appointed two new bishops for Northumbria, one of whom had his seat in the monastery of Hexham. In this case the only alteration effected by Theodore, was that the abbot of one of the monasteries under the jurisdiction of the Abbot of Lindisfarne became a bishop. Since four years later Eata was still Abbot of Lindisfarne, Melrose, and Hexham (as we shall see later), this is the only possible explanation of what actually occurred. Here again Theodore did not disturb existing Celtic discipline,³ but used it to further his own designs.

We have seen how it was evidently the intention of the archbishop that Eata should take chief place among the Northumbrian bishops. Theodore in effect consecrated a bishop who was a suffragan of Eata's: in reality it only meant that the Abbot-Bishop of Lindisfarne had another bishop subject to his jurisdiction as abbot.

¹ Raine, *Hexham*, vol. i. Preface, p. xviii.

² *Op. cit.*

³ Theodore's attitude to the mixed monasteries is a striking example.

In 684 Tunbert, this new bishop, was deposed by Theodore 'for the fault of a certain want of obedience.'¹ 'Perhaps he still clung to Aidan's ways too much.'² Cuthbert was appointed to fill the position thus vacated.

There is an Irish 'Life' of Cuthbert, in which an Irish origin is claimed for him; this 'Life' has been rightly rejected by nearly all the leading authorities as a fabulous and utterly worthless composition.³ It is strange, however, that while the Irish origin of Cuthbert has rightly been rejected as pure invention, so much that is legendary and the product of later ages is still apparently accepted as truth. Cuthbert was born in what is now the South of Scotland, and at an early age he entered the monastery of Melrose, where Eata was then abbot; he accompanied him to Ripon, but left that monastery with his abbot in 661 sooner than accept the Roman Easter and tonsure at the command of Alchfrid. Eata and Cuthbert returned to Melrose, the abbacy of which the former had probably never resigned. In 664 Boisil, the Provost of Melrose, died of the plague, and Cuthbert succeeded him in that office; then when Eata accepted consecration at the hands of Theodore, Cuthbert, doubtless owing to his tact and gentle disposition, was brought by his abbot to Lindisfarne and appointed provost there, in order to assist in bringing that monastery to accept the Roman Easter.⁴

¹ *Vita Eatae, Biogr. Misc.* SS. 121-125, and S.S. *Hexham*, vol. i. 211-214.

² Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. iii. p. 31.

³ Published in S.S. *Biogr. Misc.* Also *vide* Plummer, *Bede*, vol. ii. p. 265, and Howarth's *Golden Age*, Int. cviii.

⁴ How difficult this would be is illustrated by Adamnan's failure to induce Iona to change the Celtic custom. *Bede, H.E. Bk. V. Ch. 15.*

It has been hastily assumed that Eata took Cuthbert with him to Lindisfarne on his appointment as abbot after Colman's departure, but Boisil, Cuthbert's predecessor, did not die until after Eata's appointment. 'After he had departed to the Lord, Cuthbert became provost of that monastery (*i.e.* Melrose), where he instructed many in the rule of monastic life. . . . Nor did he bestow his teaching and his example in the monastic life on his monastery alone, but laboured far and wide to convert the people dwelling round about from the life of foolish custom to the love of heavenly joys.' ¹ This implies that Cuthbert was a considerable time Provost of Melrose, and it seems highly probable that when Eata had accepted consecration at Theodore's hands, and was faced with the difficult task of enforcing compliance with the Roman Easter at Lindisfarne, he brought Cuthbert there to assist him in this work. Bede's statement that Eata removed Cuthbert from Melrose to Lindisfarne to 'instruct the brethren in the observance of regular discipline' ² (*disciplina regularis*) has been wrongly taken to mean that he was placed there to entirely reverse the Celtic discipline of the monastery. That, however, was not the case. Cuthbert and his abbot were both of them strongly attached to Celtic usages, and while Eata had consented to acknowledge Theodore's authority and to come into line as regards the observance of Easter, he certainly was not prepared to alter the whole constitution of his monastery. In Bede's *History* we read that 'Cedd kept the Lenten fast according to the custom of those from whom he had learned the rule of *regular discipline*,' and he

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 27.

² *Ibid*

established in his monastery of Lastingham 'religious customs according to the use of Lindisfarne, where he had been trained.'¹ Here 'regular discipline' is especially used of the Celtic discipline of Lindisfarne, and Bede's expression therefore regarding Cuthbert can mean no more than that he was removed to Lindisfarne to teach the brethren the same rule he had taught in Melrose—the Celtic. Bede tells us how difficult was Cuthbert's task in inducing Eata's monks to abandon the Celtic computation of Easter; in the 'Life' of Cuthbert we read that there were certain Brothers in the monastery who preferred their own custom,² and the change to the new rule caused much opposition and many heated discussions.³

Cuthbert remained under Eata as Provost of Lindisfarne for some years; after this, in Bede's words, 'as he grew in goodness and intensity of devotion he attained also to a hermit's life of contemplation in silence and solitude.'⁴ For this purpose he retired to the small island of Farne off the coast of Northumberland, and there he had lived the life of an anchorite for many years when, in 684, the call came to him to receive episcopal rank.

The circumstances of Cuthbert's consecration are surrounded with difficulties and have been little understood. We must therefore carefully examine what the earliest authorities tell us of them. A Synod was held at Twyford in Northumberland, at which King Egfrid and Archbishop Theodore were

¹ *Op. cit.* Bk. III. Ch. 23.

² Bede, *Vita Cuthberti*, Ch. 16.

³ Plummer recognizes that Cuthbert's trouble was owing to the attempt to introduce the Roman Easter. Bede, vol. i. Int. xxix.

⁴ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 28.

present. This assembly was probably convened in connection with Tunbert's deposition and the filling of the position vacated by him. Bede says that at this Synod Theodore presided, and that Cuthbert was, with one mind and consent of all, chosen Bishop of the Church of Lindisfarne.¹ 'They could not, however, draw him from his solitude; many messengers and letters were sent to him; at last the king himself, accompanied by Trumwine, Bishop of the Picts, and many other persons, among whom were the monks of Lindisfarne themselves, sailed to the island where Cuthbert was, and entreated him to return with them.'² At last he was drawn from his beloved retreat and went back with them to the Synod. When he arrived, we are told that he was most reluctantly overcome by the unanimous resolution of all present, and compelled to take upon him the duties of the episcopate. We are next told that Cuthbert's consecration did not take place immediately, but was postponed until the winter, which was near at hand, was over; then the following Easter, we read, Cuthbert was consecrated by Theodore, seven bishops coming together for his consecration. Bede now makes the apparently contradictory statement that Cuthbert was first elected Bishop of the Church of Hagustald (he has previously told us that he was chosen Bishop of the Church of Lindisfarne) in the place of Tunbert, 'but because he chose rather to be placed over the Church at Lindisfarne, in which he had lived, it was thought fit that Eata should return to the See of the Church of Hagustald, to the rule of which he had been first

¹ *Op. cit.*² Raine, *Hexham*, vol. i. Int. xxiii.

ordained, and that Cuthbert should take upon himself the government of the Church of Lindisfarne.' ¹ The *Vita Cuthberti* tells us that in a large Synod Cuthbert was chosen to be Bishop of the Church of *Lindisfarne*.²

How are we to explain this seeming contradiction? First of all, let us remember that Eata was Cuthbert's abbot; if Cuthbert therefore was chosen Bishop of Lindisfarne in the commonly accepted sense of a diocesan bishop, it could only be by putting out his abbot, Eata, to make room for him; and Eata clearly had committed no misconduct, and was most certainly not removed from his position. What happened appears to have been this: Theodore summoned a great Synod to consider the position created by Tunbert's deposition; at this Synod Cuthbert was suggested by all as the man for the vacant bishopric. Eata, as the chief ecclesiastic in Northumbria, would of course be present at the Synod. Tunbert was under his jurisdiction as Abbot of Lindisfarne, and so would Cuthbert be when consecrated as his successor. Bede therefore is quite correct in saying that Cuthbert was chosen Bishop of the Church of Lindisfarne (perhaps Bishop *in* the Church of Lindisfarne would more clearly express his exact position), since his consecration did

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 28. The confusion that has arisen over the failure to realize Eata's true position as Abbot of Lindisfarne is well illustrated by Mr. Plummer's comment on Bede's statement that on Tunbert's appointment to Hexham Eata remained at Lindisfarne. Plummer says this seems to show that Eata had chosen Lindisfarne and not Hexham as the seat of his bishopric, while the phrase 'Eata reverso ad sedem ecclesiae Hagustaldensis' (Bk. IV. 28) seems to point the other way. (Plummer, *Bede*, vol. ii. 224.) Eata was Celtic Abbot of Lindisfarne, ruling the daughter church as such, and with the bishop in Hexham subject to his jurisdiction as abbot.

² Bede, *Vita Cuth.* Ch. 24.

not mean the giving of jurisdiction : it simply meant that one of Eata's monks, with the consent of his abbot, received consecration from the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Cuthbert was a born recluse, and he immensely disliked the idea of leaving his beloved solitude. The idea of Theodore and Eata evidently was to make Cuthbert abbot-bishop of the subordinate monastery of Hexham (so Bede's seeming contradiction is not one at all). Cuthbert, however, resolutely refused to leave his solitude and to go to Hexham, and in the end he actually went back to his solitary island of Farne to lead the life of an anchorite.

In short, the result of the Synod was that Cuthbert was consecrated a bishop but refused to do a bishop's work—which meant that matters were in exactly the same position as before Tunbert's consecration, when Eata was Abbot-Bishop of Lindisfarne, Melrose, and Hexham. This is the only possible explanation of the difficulties surrounding Cuthbert's consecration, and that it is the true explanation is clearly evidenced by a remarkable passage in the *Vita Cuthberti* : 'When then Cuthbert, the man of God, being appointed to a bishopric, had gone back to his island, and there for some time in solitude served God with his customary devotion, his venerable Bishop Eata summoned him, and directed him to come to Melrose.'¹ Here we have it clearly stated that Cuthbert immediately after his consecration went back to his life as an anchorite ; and what is more remarkable, *Eata is referred to as still his bishop*—also,

¹ Bede, *Vita Cuthberti*, Ch. 25.

be it noted, that this interview took place at Melrose, of which monastery Eata was also abbot. As these two monasteries were for years held together, Eata was still in the year 685 Abbot of Lindisfarne, Melrose, and Hexham, and Cuthbert was under his jurisdiction. Eata died in the year 685;¹ in the same year Ecgfrid was killed at Nectansmere, and a new situation was created.

Cuthbert at this time had attained to a great celebrity on account of his sanctity, and his consecration was doubtless the unanimous desire of the Synod which had been assembled. Eata's task in securing the abandonment of the Celtic Easter had been a difficult one, and we may be sure that feeling would be still further stirred by Tunbert's deposition. Theodore's policy was, as we have seen, one of conciliation within certain limits, and we may well believe that, having deposed Tunbert for exceeding these limits, he would try to placate Celtic feeling by a popular appointment.

There is evidence that at this time the Church of Lindisfarne received considerable gifts of land from King Ecgfrid. That very old authority, the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, tells us that 'King Ecgfrid gave him (Cuthbert—*i.e.* the Church of Lindisfarne) the territory which is called Cartmel, *and all the Britons along with it.*'² That is, Celtic Christians outside the limits of the Northumbrian kingdom and subject only to the 'imperium' of the King of Northumbria, were placed under the jurisdiction of a Northumbrian bishop in communion with the See of Canterbury,

¹ *Ric. Hagust.* Bk. I. Ch. 10. This is the correct date.

² *Hist. de S. Cuth.* Ch. 6. *Rolls Symeon*, vol. i. p. 200.

for Eata, Celtic abbot though he was, had submitted to Theodore's authority. This is yet another example of Ecgfrid's attempts to bring the Celtic communities which surrounded his kingdom into the fold of the Roman communion.

Cuthbert was a typical Celtic saint, and he simply could not understand the system of diocesan episcopacy: he does not seem to have realized that his consecration would mean that he *must* undertake the duties of the episcopate. Cuthbert was doubtless quite accustomed to the idea of a bishop who was an anchorite, and being raised to episcopal rank would not necessarily mean to him the giving up of his life of solitude—as it would to Theodore. A glance at the *Irish Annals* will illustrate the truth of this. In the Index to the *Annals of Ulster*¹ there is a list of fifteen bishop anchorites, to say nothing of twenty-six bishop monks and forty-nine bishop abbots.

Cuthbert, therefore, in going back to his solitude after his consecration was doing nothing out of conformity with the discipline of the Celtic Church in which he had been trained. Exaltation of the life of the solitary and also extreme severity in penances was a marked characteristic of the Celtic Church; Cuthbert, 'as his zeal for perfection grew, shut himself up in his cell, entirely away from the sight of men,' at last he even shut up the window and only opened it to give 'the blessing, or for some other avowed necessity.'² Adamnan, a man of the Scottish race in the monastery of Coldingham, 'never took any food or drink except only on Sundays or Thursdays, and often spent whole nights in watching

¹ Rolls Series, vol. iv.

² Bede, *Vita Cuth.* Ch. 18.

and prayer.’¹ Drythelm, an inmate of the monastery of Melrose, ‘had a place of abode assigned apart in that monastery’; he was accustomed to plunge into the river ‘and to continue saying psalms or prayers in the same as long as he could endure it, standing still while the waves flowed over him, sometimes up to the middle and sometimes even up to the neck in water,’² and in winter, we are told, he even had the ice broken to make room for him to stand in the river. All this is markedly characteristic of the Celtic saints, and it is to be observed that we do not find these austerities practised by those who were of the Roman party in England.

One of the strangest inventions of a later age are the stories of Cuthbert’s alleged dislike of women, all of which must be consigned to the scrap-heap, together with the fable of the saint’s Irish origin; the earliest lives of Cuthbert know nothing of it,³ it is an invention of the Norman period. A few examples will suffice to show this clearly. We know that Cuthbert often visited the house of a pious

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 25.

² *Op. cit.* Bk. V. Ch. 12.

³ *Vita Cuth.* Ch. 24. It is interesting to see how the story of Cuthbert’s dislike for women arose. There is no trace of this alleged trait of the saint in the two earliest *Lives* or in the *Historia Ecclesiastica* of Bede; on the contrary we find numerous instances of his association with women recorded. Not until the Norman Conquest do we find these stories. Symeon of Durham gives an explanation of why women were excluded from Cuthbert’s churches; he says that it was because of Cuthbert’s horror at the evil lives of the inmates of the mixed monastery of Coldingham. He then gives in Bede’s words an account of the wickedness at Coldingham and the destruction of the monastery by fire as a Divine punishment. But, be it observed, Bede nowhere says that Cuthbert ordered women to be excluded from his churches because of the case of Coldingham. Bede’s words are a plain statement of facts, and Symeon has connected the two separate facts of the destruction of Coldingham and the expulsion of women from Cuthbert’s churches as enforced in his own day. One cannot help feeling that it was a Norman fable, invented to influence the feeling of the times against the married clergy, who were in possession even of Cuthbert’s own church of Durham until ejected by Bishop Saint Carileph.

woman who had nursed him in his infancy ;¹ he was also on most intimate terms with the Abbess Ebbe. One day the abbess sent messengers to Cuthbert entreating him to come and visit her monastery. ' This loving message from the handmaid of his Lord he could not treat with neglect, but coming to the place, and *stopping several days there*, he confirmed by his life and conversation the way of truth which he taught.'² Cuthbert's relations with the Abbess Ælfleda are most interesting. The abbess requested an interview with the saint. Cuthbert therefore entered *with the brethren* into a ship and went to meet Ælfleda on Coquet Island.³ He not only went himself, but took his monks to a mixed monastery. Two years later Cuthbert visited Ælfleda again at Osingadum (Easington, near Whitby) for the purpose of consecrating a church. We are told that they dined together, and at the meal the knife fell from his trembling hand, for his thoughts were elsewhere ; thereupon he playfully said, ' You wish me to eat all day ; I must rest sometimes.'⁴ These examples will be sufficient to show how utterly without foundation is Cuthbert's alleged dislike of women.⁵ This last example is another interesting example of Cuthbert's Celtic proclivities. Whitby was in Deira, and by no stretch of the imagination can we suppose it subject to the jurisdiction of the Abbot of Lindisfarne. Theodore had passed legislation against the

¹ Bede, *Vita Cuthberti*, Ch. 4.

² Bede, *Vita Cuth.* Ch. 10. An interesting case is where a small band of nuns during the Pictish troubles take refuge in Cuthbert's house. *Vita*, Ch. 30.

³ Bede, *Vita Cuth.* Ch. 24.

⁴ *Op. cit.* Ch. 34.

⁵ On Coldingham, *vide Vita Cuth.* Ch. 25. *Vita Anon.* Ch. 36.

practice of one bishop intruding himself into the diocese of another ;¹ yet here we find Cuthbert, regardless of this, exercising his episcopal functions in another bishop's territory. Even Cuthbert's dwelling on the island of Farne was a typically Celtic one. Howarth says ' it was apparently a rath,'² the walls of which were built of unwrought stones and turves, and inside this enclosure was built an oratory and the saint's dwelling-place.

Cuthbert's fame outshone that of any other saint in the north of England. Wilfrid, Acca, Benedict Biscop, Ceolfrid, were all eclipsed by him ; Wilfrid, that great champion of Roman usages, has only one church dedicated to him in all Northumberland³ and his name does not appear in the Calendar of the Church of England. Cuthbert's fame was too great to be suppressed, the Roman party therefore annexed him.

The death of Eata and Ecgrid, the accession of Aldfrid, and the political events of the year 685, exercised a profound influence on the Church of Lindisfarne.

John of Beverley was consecrated Bishop of Hexham, then Wilfrid returned and was restored to Hexham ; John was removed to make way for him, after having held the bishopric only one year.

In 687 Cuthbert died. Wilfrid then seems to have made an attempt to gain control over Lindisfarne and compel the abolition of Celtic usages. Bede says : ' The venerable Bishop Wilfrid held the bishopric of that church for one year, until one should be chosen to be ordained bishop in the room

¹ Council of Hertford, Art. II.

² Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. iii. p. 24.

³ Raine, *Hexham*, vol. i. p. 10.

of Cuthbert.' ¹ On Eata's death Cudda ² had been elected abbot in his place ; he must have been a very old man and he was, we know, stricken with paralysis. He appears only to have been abbot a very short time, for at the time of Cuthbert's death we are told that Erefrid the priest presided over the monastery of Lindisfarne as abbot.³ It is therefore incorrect to say that Wilfrid administered the See of Lindisfarne for a year : the administration of that monastery was in the hands of its abbot. What Wilfrid really did was evidently to perform the necessary episcopal duties for the monastery until a new bishop should be consecrated, and Bede's language implies no more than this. Wilfrid, however, did make a determined attempt to crush out the peculiar usages of that monastery and to bring it under his control as Bishop of Northumbria. Bede tells us that he caused ' such a breeze of trial to the monks that many thought to leave their home, rather than dwell there at the risk of expulsion.' ⁴

Wilfrid most signally failed in this attempt. Aldfrid was by education and in his sympathies strongly pro-Celtic. Theodore also could no longer exercise his former influence owing to the distracted state of the country politically. Lindisfarne therefore went on its own way without interference, with its bishop subject to the abbot, and this state of affairs continued until the year 721. In 688 a bishop (Eadburt) was consecrated for Lindisfarne, by whom we are not told, and he held the bishopric ten years.

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 29.

² Eddius, Ch. 2.

³ Symeon of Durham, *Hist. Ecc. Dunl.* Bk. I, Ch. 10, and Bede, *Vita Cuth.* Ch. 28.

⁴ Bede, *Vita Cuth.* Ch. 46.

On the death of Eadbert, Eadfrid was consecrated bishop, and he held the bishopric twenty-two years. There is complete silence as to where and by whom he was consecrated ; it is also worthy of note that he was not cited by the Pope to appear at the Synod on the Nidd.¹

Eadfrid had spent several years in Ireland, where he had received his education, and it is to him that Aldhelm addressed his letter of protest against the habit of English students going to Ireland for their education.² How thoroughly Irish was Eadfrid's education is evidenced by the fact that although an Englishman himself, he was the scribe of one of the most magnificent of the Irish illuminated MSS. that have come down to us—the Gospels of Lindisfarne. A tenth-century gloss written in the volume tells us that ' Eadfrid, Bishop of the Lindisfarne Church, at first wrote this book in honour of God and St. Cuthbert, and all the saints in common that are in the island.'³

When Eadfrid died in 721, Ethelwald, Abbot of Melrose, and therefore also of Lindisfarne (since these two monasteries were held together since 664), was (apparently after an interval of three years, during which presumably the bishopric was vacant) consecrated bishop, and so the abbacy and bishopric became united in the person of one man.

It is not known in what year Ethelwald became Abbot of Lindisfarne and Melrose. Erefrid was apparently succeeded as abbot by Guthfrid,⁴ and

¹ H. and S. *Councils*, vol. iii. p. 263.

² Giles, *Op. Ald.* 91-95.

³ *The Gospel according to St. John in Anglo-Saxon*, p. viii. Skeat.

⁴ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 1.

Guthfrid may have been succeeded by Wigbert, but this is not certain. Ethelwald was Abbot of Lindisfarne and Melrose then at the time of Bishop Eadfrid's death. Howarth notices that the date of Ethelwald's succession to the See of Lindisfarne is given as 724,¹ and that this means that it was vacant for three years. It certainly looks as if there was trouble over the appointment of a successor to Eadfrid; the Northumbrian ecclesiastical authorities (and Bishop Acca was now at the height of his power) were evidently determined to put an end to the peculiar position of Lindisfarne, and may have refused to allow the consecration of a bishop who would have no jurisdiction.

The Roman party were now very powerful, and Ethelwald appears to have consented to be consecrated bishop, and thus bring to an end the peculiar system of the Celtic Church, which had thus existed in the Church of Lindisfarne for nearly sixty years after the Synod of Whitby.

Two facts in connection with the change at Lindisfarne from the Celtic monastic to the diocesan system may be noticed: one is that the account of the peculiar organization of the monastery given by Bede in the *Vita Cuthberti* is strangely absent in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*—one cannot help thinking because it had ceased to exist. The other is that in the gloss which gives the history of the volume in the Lindisfarne Gospels, Eadfrid is called Bishop of the Lindisfarne *Church*, but his successor Ethelwald is called bishop of the *people* of the Lindisfarne island. This, although a gloss of the tenth century, certainly

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. iii. p. 122.

is worthy of notice, and it may be a record of the change to the usual system of church government at Lindisfarne.

We may now give the names of the bishops and abbots of Lindisfarne so far as they are known, from 664 down to 721, the year of the abolition of Celtic jurisdiction.

BISHOPS.	ABBOTS.
Eata (from 678)	Eata
Cuthbert	Cudda
Eadbert	Erefrid
Eadfrid	Guthfrid
Ethelwald (consecrated after a vacancy of three years)	Wigbert (uncertain) Ethelwald

Celtic influence lingered on in Lindisfarne long after the bishopric and abbacy had been merged in one man.

In 793 the monastery was destroyed by the Danes ; the monks, however, returned again to their church and rebuilt it. In 875, on the Danes again advancing, they a second time deserted their church. Bishop Eardulf, Eadred, Abbot of Carlisle, and a few faithful followers, took up St. Cuthbert's body and set out, they knew not whither. For seven years they wandered from place to place, until the Danes had been subdued by King Alfred. In 882 the wanderers reached Craike. There Abbot Eadred seems to have ingratiated himself with the Danish chief, Guthred, under whose auspices the brethren moved to Cuncacaestre (Chester-le-Street).¹ There Bishop Eardulf fixed his episcopal see. About the year 821

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. iii. p. 62.

the See of Hexham came to an end, 'probably because it was not required,'¹ owing, as Raine thinks, to the disturbed state of the country.

'At Chester-le-Street in 883 the two dioceses of Hexham and Lindisfarne were practically united, Lindisfarne having the pre-eminence, and very properly too, over her resuscitated sister.'² This union of Celtic Lindisfarne with the See of Wilfrid and Acca seems to have very strongly influenced Hexham in the Celtic direction, since we have the most remarkable evidence of the survival in this diocese of two strongly Celtic customs—the hereditary succession and a married clergy.

In 1138 the last of the married priests of Hexham died at Durham. Before he died he gave seizin of the property of the Church of Hexham, the greater part of which he still held, to the Austin canons who had been established in the Priory in 1113 by Thurstan, Archbishop of York. Thus in 1138, nearly a century after the Norman Conquest, the last of those Celtic customs which had held their ground so tenaciously in the Church of Lindisfarne came to an end 'when the eyes of the last of the old priests of Hexham were closed at Durham.'³

NOTE.

I ought to draw attention to the fact that the Durham *Liber Vitae* has no list of bishops. Can this have any connection with the peculiar constitution of Lindisfarne?

¹ Raine, *Hexham*, vol. i. Int. xli.

² *Vide* Chapter xiii. *infra*.

³ Raine, *Hexham*, vol. i. Int. p. lxviii.

CHAPTER XI

THE CELTIC INFLUENCE IN MERCIA

THE kingdom of Mercia received its Christianity through the instrumentality of the Celtic mission in Northumbria, but of the early history of Christianity in this, one of the greatest of the English kingdoms, we unfortunately know very little.

Mercia had no Bede to write its history. Nevertheless from various scattered notices, we are enabled to see that Celtic usages survived to a very considerable extent in this part of England.

In 653 'the middle Angles, that is, the Angles of the Midland country, under their Prince, Peada, the son of King Penda, received the faith and mysteries of the truth.'¹ In 655 Penda was slain by Oswy of Northumbria, and for three years after, the Mercian kingdom was subject to the rule of Northumbria; then Oswy gave to Peada, Penda's son—'because he was his kinsman, the kingdom of the Southern Mercians, consisting, as is said, of 5000 families, divided by the river Trent from the Northern Mercians, whose land contains 7000 families; but Peada was foully slain in the following spring by the treachery, as is said, of his wife.'²

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 21.

² *Op. cit.* Bk. III. Ch. 24.

Three years after Penda's death, however, the Mercian chiefs rebelled again and set up Wulfhere, Penda's son, as their king, and expelling Oswy's earldormen, recovered their liberty and their lands.¹

At the time of the Synod of Whitby the Christianity of Mercia was entirely Celtic in character; no Roman missionary had ever penetrated to that kingdom. Besides this there is reason to believe that large districts would be very sparsely occupied by the English settlers, and were still largely inhabited by native Britons, who were of course Christian, and would have their own clergy, who were in communion with the Celtic Church. Penda, we know, did not forbid the preaching of the Christian faith to his own subjects, he certainly therefore would not interfere with the religion of those he had conquered; ² these natives, living in districts conquered by the English, would be a powerful influence on behalf of the missionaries from Lindisfarne, since they were in communion with the same Church.

The kingdom of Mercia was an offshoot from Northumbria. Nennius tells us that Penda first separated the kingdom of Mercia from Northumbria.³ In the middle of the seventh century its area must have been comparatively limited. The kingdom of the South Saxons, one of the smallest of the English kingdoms, contained land of 7000 families ⁴ according to Bede, while, according to the same authority, the northern and southern Mercians together contained land of 12,000 ⁵ families; that would appear

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 24.

² *Op. cit.* Bk. III. Ch. 21

³ *Nennius*, ed. Mommsen, p. 208.

⁴ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 13.

⁵ *Op. cit.* Bk. III. Ch. 24.

to be only about twice the size of the present county of Sussex. We are told also by Florence of Worcester that the kings of the Mercians extended their frontiers by slow degrees.¹ Mercia was, of course, not concerned in the Synod of Whitby : that was a purely Northumbrian gathering. Five years after that event, however, Jaruman, Bishop of the Mercians, died, and we are told that Wulfhere asked Theodore for a bishop ; ² he would hardly have gone to Oswy of Northumbria, whose authority his kingdom had so lately shaken off ; Oswy's treatment of Mercia therefore had the effect of throwing Wulfhere into the arms of Theodore. The bishop Theodore sent to Mercia was Ceadda, who since Wilfrid's return had been living in retirement in his monastery of Lavingham. This appointment is another example of Theodore's tact. Ceadda was Celtic in sympathies, a pupil of Aidan's, and his appointment would mean no violent change in the Celtic usages to which the Mercians were accustomed. It must be remembered that Roman influence in Mercia at this time was non-existent ; to appoint therefore a man of Wilfrid's school of thought would have been a suicidal policy. As long as Wulfhere (who had been trained under the Celtic school, and who evidently was attached to Celtic usages) lived, Theodore did not further interfere in Mercia.

Florence of Worcester, who preserves to us much information on Mercia not given elsewhere, says that Wulfhere was the first Mercian king who received the faith,³ and this is probably correct, since Peada

¹ Flor. Wig. Appendix on Kings of Mercia.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 3.

³ Flor. Wig. *sub anno* 675.

was only permitted by Oswy to govern the southern portion of the Mercian kingdom. Wulfhere, King of Mercia, was Christian in 659, but portions of Mercia still were heathen.

The 'Life' of St. Milburga preserves to us some interesting information on the introduction of Christianity into Mercia, which is not found elsewhere. That 'Life' says, 'Merewald was King of the Mercians who were wholly given to paganism, when the holy priest Edfrid, famous for his learning, as though forewarned by a heavenly oracle came from Northumbria to convert him.'¹ The same 'Life' tells us that Merewald, King of the Mercians, was baptized by the priest Edfrid in the year 660²—that is, only four years before the Synod of Whitby. Florence of Worcester tells us who this Merewald was: he 'ruled in the western part of Mercia.'³

Ceadda, Bishop of the Mercians, died in 672, and Wynfrid, who had been his deacon, succeeded him. Wynfrid, after holding the bishopric a few years, was deposed by Theodore for some act of disobedience—in all probability too great fondness for Celtic usages; 'he retired to his monastery which is called Ad Barvae, and there ended his life in holy conversation.'⁴ Clearly he was guilty of no very grave misconduct.

On the death of Wulfhere in 675 Theodore was enabled to push forward his plans for the increase of the episcopate in Mercia. In the year of Wulfhere's

¹ *De Sancta Milburga*, Capgr. vol. ii. p. 189, ed. Horstmann.

² *Op. cit.* p. 190.

³ *Flor. Wig. sub anno*, 675.

⁴ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 6.

death, according to Bede, Theodore appointed two Mercian bishops—Sexwulf in succession to Wynfrid, and ‘Erkenwald bishop of the East Saxons in the City of London.’¹ Florence of Worcester tells us that under Ethelred of Mercia² Theodore divided the kingdom of Mercia into five dioceses. Two of these we have just mentioned, the other three, as given by Florence, are the Hwiccias with the bishop’s seat at Worcester, Leicester, and Dorchester. Five years after the appointment of Sexwulf and Erkenwald, Theodore divided Sexwulf’s diocese into two, and erected a bishopric at Leicester; this new diocese was not long held separately from Lichfield, however. Wilfrid, on his expulsion from Northumbria, was for a short time Bishop of Leicester. Sexwulf’s successors, Headda and Aldwin, held Lichfield and Leicester together, but after the death of the latter it was again separated. The other two dioceses mentioned by Florence are Dorchester and Hwiccias. The mention of Dorchester as a bishopric rests on the authority of a single passage in Bede (iv. 23) which informs us that Aetla, a pupil of St. Hilda’s, was appointed Bishop of Dorchester. Besides this there is no other evidence for the existence of a see at Dorchester at this time; probably when Ine invaded and subdued the province of the East Angles³ Dorchester ceased to be Mercian, and Aetla, like Eadhead of Ripon, would have to leave his diocese. We now come to the fifth diocese mentioned by Florence, the Hwiccias. What we know of it is of great interest.

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 6.

² Flor. Wig. App.

³ William of Malmesbury, *R.S.* Bk. I. Ch. 35.

The earliest evidence for the foundation of a bishopric at Worcester is contained in Bede. We are there told that Otffor, a pupil of St. Hilda's, was consecrated by Wilfrid, Bishop of the Hwiccias by order of King Ethelred.¹ The charter of Osric, dated 6th Nov., 676, which mentions the foundation of a bishop's see by that king as an already accomplished fact, is possibly a forgery.² Now we turn to Florence and see what he has to tell us about this province of the Hwiccias. He says: 'And because the city of Worcester at the time when the Britons or Romans were ruling in Britain, both then *and now was the well known capital of all Hwiccia or Magasitania*, he deservedly set up a bishop's chair in it, for which Tatfrith was chosen bishop, a most active and learned member of Abbess Hilda's monastery.'³

This is a most remarkable statement and its full meaning has hardly been realized. Hwiccias is clearly no Anglo-Saxon name; the Wicii, or Jugantes, were a powerful tribe of Britons who inhabited Worcestershire, Warwickshire, and the north of Gloucestershire. Also it is stated that Worcester, in the times when the Britons and afterwards the Romans ruled in Britain, had been *and still was* the well-known capital of the Hwiccias or Magesetas. It seems that there was in this district as yet only a sprinkling of English settlers; it was a conquered district under the rule of Mercian princes, but the majority of the inhabitants were Christian Britons who still even occupied their well-known capital city. This is yet another instance, in addition to those

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 23.

² *H. and S. Councils*, vol. iii. p. 129.

³ *Flor. Wig. App.*

already noticed, of a bishop in communion with the See of Rome being given jurisdiction over Celtic Christian territories, and it is yet another example of Theodore's universal practice in such cases of appointing bishops with Celtic training, but who were prepared to submit to the limitations laid down by him and to acknowledge his authority.

It will be noticed that Hereford is absent from Florence's list: Haddan and Stubbs call attention to this. What is the reason of this omission? Hereford is evidently not mentioned by Florence, because it was not until considerably later that a bishop's see was actually established in that place. We have seen how gradually the Mercian kingdom extended its boundaries, and how even the territory included in one of the new Mercian dioceses must have been inhabited largely by British Christians. Hereford, therefore, would seem to be another example of these missionary dioceses.

Bede tells us (IV. 12) that on the destruction of Rochester by Ethelred of Mercia, its bishop, Putta, 'when he understood that his church was ravaged and everything taken away from it, he went to Sexwulf, Bishop of the Mercians, and having received from him a certain church and a small piece of land, ended his days there in peace, in no way endeavouring to recover his bishopric.' This statement of Bede's has been twisted to make Putta first Bishop of Hereford; his name certainly appears first on Florence's list of bishops of the Hecanas (also a British name), and under the year 688 Florence tells us that 'on the death of Putta, Bishop of Hereford, he was succeeded by Tyrhtell.' This Tyrhtell is the

second bishop in Florence's list of bishops of the Hecanas. From Bede's description it certainly does not appear that Putta was bishop of any district in the Mercian kingdom. Sexwulf evidently gave him a church and a small piece of land sufficient to support him, in a district on the borderland of Mercia, where the English population would be comparatively small. Some years later, probably on the appointment of Tyrhtell, this church may have been made the seat of a bishop's see. Florence of Worcester, however, is the earliest authority for connecting Putta's name with the See of Hereford.

We will now trace the history of the other two of Theodore's new Mercian dioceses, London and Leicester. The atmosphere of London was, from the re-establishment of Christianity under Cedd, strongly Celtic. At the time of the Synod of Whitby the East Saxons were subject to Mercia; when the province was suffering from a visitation of the devastating plague of 664, in which Cedd their bishop died, part of the province forsook the Christian faith and reverted to heathendom. King Wulfhere, hearing of this, sent his bishop, Jaruman, to correct their error. Jaruman, having restored the faith in the province, returned to his diocese.

Shortly after the restoration of Christianity in London by the labours of Jaruman, Wini, Bishop of the West Saxons, was expelled from his diocese by Coinwalch, king of that province. He took refuge with Wulfhere of Mercia, 'from whom he purchased the bishopric of London for money, and remained in it until his death.'¹

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 7.

Both Cedd and Jaruman were in communion with the Celtic Church, and Wini, although consecrated in Gaul, was on friendly terms with that Church, and had called in two Celtic bishops to assist him at Ceadda's consecration.¹ On the death of Wini, Erkenwald was appointed Bishop of London by Theodore. About the only information Bede gives us about Erkenwald, is that before he was consecrated bishop he founded two famous monasteries, one for himself at Chertsey, the other for his sister Ethelburga at Barking; it is interesting to note that Barking was a mixed monastery,² and that in all probability it was founded after the Synod of Whitby.

We turn to the diocese of Leicester. Sexwulf, who was the first bishop, was 'abbot and founder of the monastery called Medeshamstead,'³ afterwards called Peterborough. Whether he was Celtic or Roman by training we have no means of knowing; Bede only twice mentions him by name, and all the accounts of the foundation of Peterborough are of later date and quite untrustworthy. On Sexwulf's death Wilfrid was for a short time Bishop of Leicester. It was through Wilfrid and his connection with this part of Mercia that Roman influence found its way into the great Midland kingdom. Not only did Wilfrid hold the bishopric of Leicester, but he had also at other times performed episcopal functions in Mercia; moreover he was the fast friend of its king, Ethelred. Wilfrid must have made his influence felt in that part of Mercia, 'where he seems to have

¹ *Op. cit.* Bk. III. Ch. 28.

² *Op. cit.* Bk. IV. Ch. 7.

³ *Op. cit.* Bk. IV. Ch. 6.

founded several monasteries, which the Danish invasion for the most part swept away.'

Wilfrid himself died in Mercia in a monastery he had founded—that of Oundle in Northamptonshire. We see therefore that the Christianity of Mercia was entirely Celtic, until Roman influence was introduced by Wilfrid into a portion of that kingdom. In spite, however, of the scantiness of our materials, we can say with certainty that Celtic customs survived in Mercia, even as late as the end of the tenth century. A few examples will make this clear.

Most interesting evidence for the survival of Celtic usages in Mercia is to be found in the contemporary 'Life' of St. Guthlac by Felix. When this saint was twenty-four years of age he entered the monastery of Hrepadun (Repton), then presided over by an Abbess Ethelthrytha. Under her he received St. Peter's tonsure. Felix expressly tells us that Repton was a Catholic congregation. This Catholic congregation, be it noted, is a mixed monastery. We also ask why it should be necessary for a contemporary writer to especially inform us that Guthlac received St. Peter's tonsure if the Roman usage was then universally observed over England? Florence of Worcester tells us that this happened in 697, that is, more than thirty years after the Synod of Whitby. This seems to show that even as regards the tonsure the Celtic usage survived in places.

There is evidence of the existence of Irish clergy in Mercia at the beginning of the ninth century. Two of the signatures to the Council of Clovesho, held in 825 under Beornwulf, King of Mercia, appear to be those of Irishmen—Tudda (Tuda) and Deor-

noth (Dinoth).¹ Also there is a most interesting letter from the Emperor Charles the Great to Offa, King of Mercia, regarding a certain Irish priest in the diocese of Cologne. Charles requests Offa to insist on the return of this priest because he has eaten flesh in Lent. The Emperor says, 'Our bishops thought good to send him to be judged by his own bishop where he took his vow to God.'² This certainly looks as if this priest had been ordained in Mercia and is further evidence of surviving Celtic influence in that province.

Right on to the close of the tenth century we have evidence of the survival of Celtic customs in Mercia ; there seems indeed to have been strong Keledean influence in Mercia, and indeed over most of England, at this period, judging from the numbers of married clergy, and the fact recorded by Eadmer that these married clergy, when threatened with ejection by Dunstan, 'They sent to the land of the Scots'³ and brought from there a certain Bernelm, a man according to report of very great eloquence, whom they hired at a great price to defend their cause against Dunstan.' This was at the Council of Calne in 977.⁴

¹ H. and S. *Councils*, vol. iii. p. 600.

² *Op. cit.* pp. 486-487.

³ When Bede wrote and for more than two centuries later 'Scottia' refers to Ireland and Ireland alone. Towards the end of the tenth century it began to be applied to a very limited district of Britain. (*Vide* Plummer, *Bede*, vol. ii. p. 11.) Here 'Scottia' is possibly used in this latter sense and may include all the territories inhabited by those of Irish race, whether in Ireland or in what is now called Scotland. Bernelm was 'possibly an Irishman, but the Saxon name takes us rather to southern Scotland.' H. and S. *Councils*, vol. ii. part i. p. 150.

⁴ Eadmer, *V. St. Dunstan*. (This synod, though held at Calne, represented all England. *Vide* Flor. Wig.)

CHAPTER XII

THE CELTIC INFLUENCE IN WESSEX

LIKE all the English kingdoms which did not receive the Christian faith direct from the Canterbury mission, Wessex seems to have had a strong Celtic element in its Christianity for a considerable time.

As regards Birinus, who is said to have been the first Christian missionary to the West Saxons, we know very little of him, but what we do know is strongly against his having been in any way commissioned by the See of Rome. We know that Birinus was consecrated in Italy by Asterius,¹ Archbishop of Milan, who was then residing at Genoa in Imperial territory, whither his predecessors had fled when, in 568, Lombardy was conquered by the Lombards, and had acted as bishops of that city. Bede's whole account of Birinus is very strange ; he begins : ' At that time the nation of the West Saxons, formerly called Gewissae, received the faith of Christ.' Bede's information was evidently very scanty, since he does not know even the approximate date of Birinus' mission. The rest of the account is equally vague. We are told that Birinus promised

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 7. Bede by mistake calls him Bishop of Genoa.

in the presence of Pope Honorius 'that he would sow the seeds of the holy faith *beyond* the farthest inland regions of the English, where no other teacher had been before him. Hereupon at the bidding of the Pope he received consecration from Asterius, Bishop of Genoa, but on his arrival in Britain he first came to the nation of the Gewissae, and finding all in that place confirmed pagans, he thought it more profitable to preach the Word there than to proceed further to seek for other hearers of his preaching.' Next we are told that when the King of the West Saxons was being baptized by Birinus, Oswald, King of the Northumbrians, was present as his godfather. Afterwards Oswald married the daughter of the man whom he had just stood sponsor for. Next we read the two kings gave Birinus the city called Dorcic as an episcopal see, 'and having built and consecrated churches, and by his pious labours having called many to the Lord, he departed to the Lord and was buried in the same city.' All this is very vague ; not only this, but there are grave difficulties in the way of accepting much of what Bede does tell us. First of all, Birinus is made to promise the Pope, that he would sow the seeds of the faith in districts which were already Christian, and had been for centuries. Next, it is certainly most striking that the Pope should completely ignore the Canterbury mission, whose bishop had been constituted a metropolitan by his predecessor. These two facts cannot be explained away, and they are fatal to the story of Birinus' alleged commission from the See of Rome. As regards the date of Birinus' death there is also great uncertainty. Under the year 650 the *Anglo-Saxon*

Chronicle has the following entry : ‘ In this year Ægelbyrht of Gaul received the bishopric of the West Saxons, after Birinus the Roman bishop . . . ’ ; in all probability this is the correct date of Agilbert’s arrival in Wessex, but it will be observed that the *Chronicle* does not attempt to give the date of Birinus’ death. The fact that Oswald of Northumbria was Cynegil’s godfather is worthy of notice, since it points very strongly to Birinus being on friendly terms with the Celtic Church ; in fact there is a strong possibility he may have been a Celt. ‘ His name Birinus, or Birin, is clearly not a Roman one, and has been identified with considerable probability with the Irish name Byrne, and it may be he came from the land of those Irish Scots who had settled in the west of Scotland. There, as the late Bishop Forbes of Brechin has suggested, it is possible that we have traces of him in the local nomenclature, as in the name of the parish of Kilbirnie in Ayrshire. He further says that a Kilbirnie Loch at the west end of the parish of Beith, and also the parish of Drumbarney in the most beautiful part of Strathearn, probably take their names from the Saint.’¹

Birinus therefore was probably a Celt by birth, consecrated in Italy, and on friendly terms with the Celtic Church ; but whether he died in Wessex, or what happened to him, we have no means of knowing. All we can say is that the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is probably correct in saying that his successor Agilbert became Bishop of the West Saxons in 650.

The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under the year 636

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. i. p. 36.

mentions the baptism of Cwichelm, the son of Cynegils, and also under the year 639 the baptism by Birinus of Cuthred, son of Cwichelm. Bede knows nothing of these events, and inasmuch as Cwichelm in all probability died a heathen, and Bede does not give us the date of Cynegil's death, we are forced to the conclusion that these entries are pure invention.¹ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* informs us that Coinwalch, Cynegil's son, succeeded to the throne in 643 ; then about 650 another bishop came into the province of the West Saxons—' Agilbert, a native of Gaul, but who had lived a long time in Ireland for the purpose of reading the Scriptures. He attached himself to the king and voluntarily undertook the ministry of preaching.'² The king asked Agilbert to accept an episcopal see and remain as bishop of his people, and he complied with this request. Then after some years the king grew weary of his bishop on account, Bede tells us, of his barbarous speech ; he therefore, without consulting him, divided his diocese and brought in another bishop of his own speech, by name Wini. In a few years, however, Wini too was expelled by the same king. This occurred just after the Synod of Whitby.

Wessex, therefore, had received the Christian faith from a bishop who died when and where we know not ; and moreover—a fact which seems to have escaped notice—no steps whatever seem to have been taken by anyone to appoint a successor to him. Until the year 650 therefore, in which year Agilbert

¹ There is a tumulus known as ' Cwichelm's Law ' in Berkshire. This goes to show that Cwichelm died a heathen.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 7.

probably became bishop, Wessex must have been largely heathen. During the next fourteen years the province was ruled by a bishop with an Irish education¹ and favourable to the Roman Easter, and a Saxon bishop consecrated in Gaul, but on friendly terms with those who kept Easter according to the Celtic custom.

The predominant influence in Wessex would probably be the Celtic, but since that province had been dependent for its knowledge of the faith on the efforts of isolated missionaries, and had no direct connection with Lindisfarne or Canterbury, the sympathies of the province were probably not very pronounced in favour of either Celtic or Roman usages.

The history of Wessex was very different from that of Northumbria and Mercia, both of which had received their Christianity from, and were in close touch with, the Lindisfarne mission. Roman usages therefore were more easily accepted in Wessex than in the kingdoms of Northumbria and Mercia. The Christianity of Wessex had no close ties with either Ireland or Rome, since the first missionaries were men who would appear to have been on friendly terms with both communions. Agilbert had studied in Ireland, and there is no evidence that he was in any way hostile to the Celtic Church; he was certainly an advocate of the Roman Easter, but then that had already been accepted in southern Ireland, where in all probability he had been studying. Wessex, however, produced a man whose influence on behalf of Roman usages extended far beyond the confines of that kingdom. That man was Aldhelm.

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 7.

Bishop Forest Browne has pointed out that in the last quarter of the sixth century, 'roughly speaking, the Britons were still in possession of the land for some miles east of Malmesbury right through to St. David's and Cricklade to the Land's End. It was the impenetrable wedge of forest territory which forced the Saxons in their progress up the Thames to make a detour, leaving the Britons at Malmesbury undisturbed.'¹ In 577 the battle of Dyrham gave the Saxons Gloucester, Bath, and Cirencester, and that 'made more marked than ever the wedge of forest territory in which Malmesbury stood still a British hold'; but fourteen years later the Britons as well as the Angles conspired against the victor of this battle, Ceawlin of Wessex, destroyed his forces at Wodnesdic, and drove him into exile.² The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* says: 'In this year (692) there was a great slaughter in Britain at Waddesbeorg (Wansborough) and Ceawlin was driven out.' This battle made secure the British territory around Malmesbury.

About 637, says Bishop Browne, 'long before any Saxon in the neighbourhood was a Christian, an Irish Christian teacher, Maildubh,' settled at Malmesbury. 'There was a sufficient population for his teaching purposes. They were Britons and Christians; the pagan Saxons were not there.'³ When at last the Saxons did conquer Malmesbury, Maildubh still stuck to his post, and the Christian Saxon king sent his relative Aldhelm to be his pupil. Aldhelm

¹ G. F. Browne, *St. Aldhelm and His Times*, p. 42.

² W. M., *Gesta Regum*, Bk. I. Ch. 17.

³ G. F. Browne, *Aldhelm*, pp. 43-44.

therefore received his early education under a Celtic teacher.

From Malmesbury Aldhelm went to Canterbury to the school of Hadrian ; later he returned to his old monastery, but returned a convert to the Roman usages he had learnt in Kent.

Sometime between the years 672 and 676 Aldhelm succeeded his master Maildubh as Abbot of Malmesbury, and here he used the learning he had largely acquired at Irish hands to help forward the acceptance of Roman usages.

William of Malmesbury tells us that Aldhelm was not less than seventy years of age at the time of his death, which occurred in 709—this would place his birth about the year 639. Aldhelm received his education from ‘ a certain Meldun, or Maildulf, a Scot by origin, a philosopher by erudition, a monk by profession, a voluntary exile from his native land.’ This Maildulf ‘ spent his life as a hermit, and taught a school at Malmesbury for his subsistence which grew into a monastery.’¹ Aldhelm became a pupil of Maildulf’s, and must have remained several years in his monastery, then he went to Canterbury to the school established by Abbot Hadrian ; this cannot have been earlier than 671,² in which year Hadrian took over the government of his monastery there.

Aldhelm’s health broke down at Canterbury,³ and on this account he returned to Malmesbury, where he evidently continued to live for some time under Maildulf ;⁴ then in 676 at the latest Aldhelm was

¹ William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum*, pp. 333-334, R.S.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 20.

³ *Op. ed.* Giles, p. 330.

⁴ *Op. cit.*

appointed Abbot of Malmesbury. There he remained as abbot until, in 705, he was appointed Bishop of Sherborne. Four years later he died. Aldhelm can have only spent a comparatively short time in Canterbury. He had returned to Malmesbury and had been living there at least three years at the time he was made abbot, probably more ;¹ he cannot have been in Canterbury later than the year 673, and it is most improbable he was there even as late as that ; he cannot have gone there, as we have seen, before 671. This fact is of the greatest importance when we come to consider the influence Aldhelm was enabled to exercise on account of his great learning.

There were most determined attempts by the Roman party to depreciate that Irish learning, which they themselves were unable to give in England, and which at that time could be obtained in no other country in Europe,² and so Aldhelm's short stay in Canterbury has been made responsible for the great learning, which he had undoubtedly acquired long before he went there.

It was considered derogatory that famous Englishmen should have received their education at the hands of the Celtic Church. Aldhelm himself, although educated by an Irishman, turned against the Church³ which had educated him, and did all in his power to discourage English students from going to Ireland for their education.⁴ Aldhelm's great learning, then, was imparted to him by Irish scholars,

¹ *Ald. Op.* ed. Giles, p. 330.

² *Vide* Chapter XV. *infra*.

³ Wilfrid was another celebrated case : he was a pupil of Lindisfarne.

⁴ *Ald. Letter to Eahfrid, Op.* ed. Giles, pp. 91-95.

nowhere else could he have obtained it, and it was precisely this education, and his great fame as a teacher, which enabled him to exercise such a powerful influence on behalf of Roman usages. At some period of his life Aldhelm visited Rome. The evidence for this, as Plummer has pointed out, rests not on his biographers, but on a contemporary letter addressed to him.¹ Howarth has shown that Aldhelm introduced the Benedictine rule into Malmesbury.² This is apparent from his poem 'De laudibus Virginum.' He also took a most important part in endeavouring to secure conformity with the Roman Easter among the British Christians.

In the year 705 a West Saxon Synod was held, because 'certain Britons, bishops only in name, held heretical views on the date of keeping Easter, and on several other practices of ecclesiastical orthodoxy.' This Synod requested Aldhelm, who as yet was only Abbot of Malmesbury, to write a book in order that these irregularities might be destroyed.³

Referring to this Synod, Bede says that Aldhelm, 'by order of a Synod of his own people wrote an excellent book against the error of the Britons in not celebrating Easter at the due time, and in doing divers other things contrary to the purity of doctrine and peace of the Church, and through the reading of this book many of the Britons who were subject to the West Saxons were led by him to adopt the Catholic celebration of our Lord's Paschal Feast.'⁴ This

¹ Plummer, *Bede*, vol. ii. p. 309.

² Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 461.

³ Faricius, *Vita Ald.* ed. Giles, pp. 362-363.

⁴ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 18.

passage is most interesting. We here see the Celtic Church in the year 705 actually maintaining a separate existence in Saxon territory side by side with the Roman communion ; this is implied by the words ' many of the Britons who were subject to the West Saxons.' Observe, too, that Bede only says that these Britons conformed on the question of Easter ; he is silent as regards ' the divers other things contrary to the peace and purity of the Church.' Evidently in spite of Aldhelm's letter the two communions continued to exist side by side. At the same time Aldhelm, by command of the same Synod, addressed a letter to Geraint,¹ the British King of Damnonia, urging him to give up his Celtic practices and to conform to the Roman Easter.

Aldhelm was no more able than Wilfrid to suppress Celtic usages in Wessex ; he introduced the Benedictine rule, but he could not suppress the mixed monasteries, which continued to be founded even after the Synod of Whitby, and in spite of the disfavour with which Theodore looked upon such institutions.² Two examples will illustrate this. The monastery of Wimborne, a mixed one, was founded by Cuthburga, wife of Aldfrid of Northumbria.³ There is a short poem of Aldhelm's on a basilica built by Bugga, daughter of Centwine, King of the West Saxons : this poem was written when Ine was King of the West Saxons. Bugga's monastery was a mixed one, for in this poem Aldhelm describes the antiphonal singing of the monks and nuns.⁴

¹ H. and S. *Councils*, vol. iii. pp. 268-273.

² *Penitential*, Bk. II. Ch. 6, Art. 8.

³ Flor. Wig. *sub anno* 718.

⁴ *Op. Ald.* ed. Giles, p. 117.

Aldhelm was very Celtic however in the austerities which he practised ; these must have been the fruits of his Celtic training. William of Malmesbury tells us that in order to subdue the temptations of the flesh he used to submerge himself in a well while he sang the Hours.¹ Even Aldhelm's involved and inflated Latin, on which he evidently prides himself so much, came, as M. Roger has shown, from Irish and Welsh models. Speaking of the letter to Eahfrid, M. Roger acutely remarks : ' Peut-être Aldhelm a-t-il voulu, Écrivain à un homme qui étudiait en Irlande, montrer qu'on pouvait posséder un beau style sans avoir entrepris ce voyage.' ²

One other most interesting Celtic survival in Wessex must be noticed. The Abbey of Abingdon was founded in the reign of Centwine. An anonymous notice in the Chronicle of Abingdon gives an account of the building of this Saxon monastery as erected by its founder. Howarth has noticed the fact that the second abbot of this monastery bears a Celtic name—Conan.³ It does not however seem to have been noticed that this monastery was evidently constructed on the Celtic plan, the monastic buildings being placed in the middle of a cashel, or stone fort, such as we see in the case of Inishmurray and other well-known Irish and Scottish examples, and which was the usual custom in the early Celtic Church.⁴

¹ W. M., *Gest. Pont.* 357, R.S.

² Roger, *L'enseignement des Lettres Classiques*, p. 295, as quoted by Howarth, vol. iii. p. 372.

³ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 122.

⁴ *Abingdon Chronicle*, vol. ii. pp. 272-273, R.S. Other examples in England of churches placed within a rath, or cashel, are evidently the remains at North and South Elmham in Norfolk and Suffolk. See description in G. F. Browne, *Conversion of the Heptarchy*, pp. 78-79.

In the year 688 Caedwalla, King of Wessex, abdicated and went on pilgrimage to Rome, where he died. In 728 his successor, Ine, followed his example. This must have had a great effect in increasing Roman influence in Wessex. That province had never any connection with the great Lindisfarne mission ; the first Christian missionaries we read of, Maildulf, Birinus, and Agilbert, were all indeed either Celts or trained under Celtic influence. Agilbert and Wini, however, were both driven from their sees, and the kingdom did not have a settled episcopate until Leutherius was consecrated by Theodore in 670. The disturbed state of the country must have prevented Christianity taking any firm root before then, and when a settled state of affairs ecclesiastically was finally established the influence of Aldhelm was in the ascendant.

When eventually Wessex became under Alfred and his successors the most powerful kingdom in England, its Christianity, although it retained some strong Celtic characteristics, was nevertheless predominantly Roman, and thus the way was paved for Dunstan and the eventual triumph of Roman customs in England.

CHAPTER XIII

THE APPOINTMENTS TO BISHOPRICS—THE MIXED MONASTERIES—THE HEREDITARY SUCCESSION.

AN analysis of the appointments to bishoprics between the years 664 and 731, the year in which Bede finished the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, is of the greatest interest, since it reveals the astonishing strength and persistence of Celtic usages over a large part of England.

We will begin with Northumbria. Between these two dates seven bishoprics were in existence at one time or another under Northumbrian jurisdiction—Lindisfarne,¹ York, Hexham, Lindsey (under Northumbria for a brief period), Ripon (for a few years), the Pictish missionary bishopric of Abercorn, and the similar bishopric of Candida Casa in the Scotie territory north of the Solway Firth. During this period fifteen bishops were appointed to the seven bishoprics. The following list will show at a glance their antecedents :

Whitby	-	-	-	-	-	3
Lindisfarne-Melrose	-	-	-	-	-	6

¹ The peculiar position of Lindisfarne has been discussed elsewhere.

Gilling ¹	-	-	-	-	-	I
Uncertain, but certainly Celtic	-					2
York, and Rome afterwards	-					I
Lindisfarne, and Rome afterwards	-					I
Malmesbury or Sherborne	-					I

An analysis of this list reveals the following facts : Of the fifteen bishops on this list, twelve were certainly educated under Celtic influence and remained under Celtic influence all their lives ; of the remaining three, two—Wilfrid and Acca—had both of them first of all a Celtic education, but they afterwards went abroad and, as is well known, became strong supporters of the opposite views ; one was a pupil of Aldhelm's,² and came to Northumbria from Wessex. Of the bishops of York three had been pupils of Hilda's monastery of Whitby, a fact which strikingly shows that Celtic Whitby, a mixed monastery, was still the most important monastery in Deira.

All the Lindisfarne appointments, as we should expect, were from Lindisfarne-Melrose. These two monasteries, as we have seen, were held together. Trumwine, Eadhead, and Tunbert were all Celtic by education and retained their sympathy with Celtic

¹ The following appears to have been Tunbert's career. Cynefrid, Abbot of Gilling, went to Ireland to study shortly before the plague of 664. Tunbert succeeded him, and remained there evidently until Wilfrid's return to Northumbria in 669, when he was restored by Theodore. Tunbert then went to Ripon. Gilling was in all probability one of the districts which was given to Wilfrid's monastery of Ripon by Ecgfrid, and Tunbert may have conformed to Wilfrid's requirements to avoid losing his position when his monastery was made over to Wilfrid. The fact that he went back to Celtic usages, taken together with this, looks as if he submitted under pressure. Tunbert cannot have gone to Ripon before 669, since we are told that at this time Ceolfred was ordained by Wilfrid, and Wilfrid was not in possession of his see until 669. Tunbert may have held Gilling under Wilfrid.

² Pecthelm of Candida Casa.

customs.¹ The appointment of a southerner to a bishopric under Northumbrian jurisdiction is of great interest; this appointment had only recently been made when the *Historia Ecclesiastica* was finished; it shows that Aldhelm's school was now turning out men of sufficient education to be raised to episcopal rank, and was making it possible to receive a liberal education in England. It is certainly very strange that not one of these bishops came from Wearmouth or Jarrow, whose learning was unquestioned, and this seems to show that the views held in those monasteries were very unpopular in Northumbria.

We turn to the province of Mercia. Here the Roman party were more favourably situated owing to the fact that Ethelred, who ascended the throne in 675, was a warm supporter of Wilfrid. Nevertheless we see strong Celtic influence in Mercia. Ceadda of Lichfield has been referred to in a previous chapter; his successor, who 'had for no small time filled the office of deacon under him,'² was deposed by Theodore for some act of disobedience³—a significant fact. The one Bishop of Dorchester, as a Mercian See, came from Whitby; so did the first two bishops of the Hwiccias, Bosel and Oftfor, although the latter subsequently went to Rome. Four Mercian bishops after the Synod of Whitby came from Northumbria; no bishop went north from the south until Pecthelm went to Candida Casa.

An appointment of exceptional interest is that of

¹ It seems hardly necessary to point out that sympathy with Celtic customs does not necessarily mean that they had not conformed to the Roman Easter and tonsure.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 3.

³ *Op. cit.* Bk. IV. Ch. 6.

Ethelwin to Lindsey on the recovery of that province by Mercia in 679. Ethelwin, after the Synod of Whitby, 'went over into Ireland to study, and having been well trained, returned to his own country, and being made bishop of the province of Lindsey, long and nobly governed the church.'¹

We find traces of the Celtic system of a bishop living in a monastery under the jurisdiction of the abbot, and that in England after the year 664 and apart from its survival in Lindisfarne. On the defeat of Ecgfrid at Nectansmere in 685 by the Picts, Trumwine, the Bishop of Abercorn, fled; he took refuge in the monastery of Whitby, where he lived for many years.² 'The royal virgin Elfled, with her mother Eanfled, whom we have mentioned before, then presided over that monastery, but when the bishop came thither that devout teacher found in him the greatest help in governing and comfort in her private life.'

A bishop in a mixed monastery, subject to the rule of the abbess—it sounds quite like Brigid of Kildare, and this in England twenty-one years after the Synod of Whitby; and the position of Trumwine as a refugee does not alter the fact that it was possible in England in the year 685 for a bishop to live in a monastery under the rule of an abbess.

We come to the mixed monasteries. These institutions in England seem almost always to have been presided over by an abbess, and they survived until swept away by the Danish invasions. Many of the leading monasteries in England after 664 were mixed ones—Whitby, Hartlepool, Coldingham, Repton,

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 27.

² *Op. cit.* Bk. IV. Ch. 26.

Ely, Bardney, Wimborne, Barking, Wenlock, and Nuneaton. This list will show how widespread were these foundations, and, what is also deserving of notice, that they were even founded by those who are represented as strongly inclined to Roman views (*e.g.* Ely, founded by Ethelthrytha), a striking fact which shows how hopeless those who wished to entirely suppress Celtic usages found their task, since even their most ardent supporters, with rare exceptions, were not prepared to give up the whole organization and customs to which they were accustomed.

In the year 680 the monastery of virgins at Coldingham was burnt down. Here are some particulars of this monastery. In it, we are told, was a man of Scottish race called Adamnan. He was undergoing a strict penance when his priest upon some sudden occasion passed over to Ireland, which was his native country, and returned no more. On hearing of his death Adamnan still keeps up his fast, and through his holiness is given a vision of the impending destruction of the monastery. We read that he told this vision to one of the brothers, who promptly informed Aebba, the mother of the community.¹

Yet another example: this one in the year 696. When Sexburg, the Abbess of Ely, translated the body of her sister Ethelthrytha, the former abbess, from the graveyard into the church, 'she ordered some of the brothers to find a stone whereof to make a coffin for this purpose.' When the body was taken up, we read that 'all the congregation, the brothers standing on one side and the sisters on the other,'

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 25.

are singing around the grave, while the abbess and a few others go within the pavilion which has been spread over it to take up and wash the bones.¹

Before we leave this subject of the mixed monasteries two other examples of extreme interest must be noticed. The first is 'a famous monastery in the province of Lindsey called Beardaneu (Bardney).'² One day there came to this monastery, which was a mixed one presided over by the Abbess Ethelhild, sister of Ethelwin, Bishop of Lindsey, a guest who was wont often in the night to be grievously tormented with an unclean spirit; 'he being hospitably entertained, when he had gone to bed after supper was suddenly seized by the Devil, and began to cry out, to gnash his teeth, to foam at the mouth, and to writhe and distort his limbs. None being able to hold or bind him, a servant ran and knocking at the door told the abbess. She, opening the monastery door, went out herself with one of the nuns to the men's apartment, and calling a priest desired that he would go with her to the sufferer.'³ This example is of the greatest interest since it shows how diametrically opposed was the Celtic idea of a monastery to the Roman. Not only were there men and women in one monastery under the abbess, but a man guest was hospitably entertained by her; neither does there seem to be any rigid separation of the sexes, since the abbess and a nun walk in the dead of night right into the men's dormitory.

The next example I propose to give, brings out clearly this what seems to us strange absence of a

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 19.

² *Op. cit.* Bk. III. Ch. 11.

³ *Op. cit.* Bk. III. Ch. 11.

separation of the sexes in a Celtic monastery. This case occurred about the year 705. A certain nun in the monastery of Wetadun, then presided over by the Abbess Heriburg, was sick. She was visited by John of Beverley, who was then Bishop of York. Bishop John took with him his deacon Berthun, who was Abbot of Beverley when the *Historia Ecclesiastica* was written, and who gave Bede an account of what happened. We will give the account in Berthun's words, as reported by Bede: 'Wherefore he (the bishop) went in, taking me with him to the maid, who lay, as I saw, in sore anguish, her arm swelling so greatly that it could not be bent at all at the elbow, and he stood and said a prayer over her, and having given his blessing went out. Afterwards as we were sitting at table at the accustomed hour, a certain man (quidam) came in and called me out, saying, "Quoenburg"—that was the maid's name—"desires that you should immediately go back to her." This I did, and entering the chamber found her of more cheerful countenance and like one in good health. And while I was sitting beside her she said, "Shall we call for something to drink?" "Yes," said I, "and right glad I am if you can." When the cup was brought and we had both drunk, she said, "As soon as the bishop had said the prayer for me and given me his blessing, and had gone out, I immediately began to mend."'¹ From Bede's use of the masculine 'quidam,' Wetadun was in all probability a mixed monastery. We see here a young cleric sitting in a nun's private apartment, even 'taking wine with her,' and all this is told quite as a

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 3.

matter of course and as if there were nothing at all unusual about it. A striking illustration that the complete separation of the nuns from the society of men simply did not exist in Celtic foundations.

I give one more example, this time from Florence of Worcester under the year 1053. 'Aed, a long-bearded clerk in Ireland, a man of great eminence and earnest piety, had a large school of clerks, maidens, and laymen ; but he subjected the maidens to the tonsure in the same manner as the clerks, on which account he was compelled to leave Ireland.'

We will supplement the examples already given with a few from Irish sources. In the 'Life' of Cairan of Cluain, a daughter of the King of Tara is sent to St. Finnian to read with him the Scriptures. Having taken the vow of chastity, Finnian requests Cairan to receive her and let her read with him until a monastery shall be found for her. Cairan consents, and the virgin receives instruction from him. Then the 'Life' proceeds : 'When the holy Father Finnian had established that virgin, and other holy virgins in a cell, the blessed fathers asked the holy Cairan about her morals and character.' Cairan answers that he knows nothing about her, since he has never looked on her face, and has never spoken to her except in connection with the lessons he was giving her, for the girl took her meals and slept with a certain holy widow. Then we are told 'that the virgin gave similar evidence concerning St. Cairan, and that many others were confirmed in true religion by means of their testimony.'¹

Clearly the risks of this system were plainly seen

¹ *Vita Sanc. Cairani de Cluain*, Plummer, V.S.H. vol. i. p. 206.

even by those who practised it, since those in authority thought it necessary to cross-examine St. Cairan as to the moral character of this girl, and evidently the girl herself as regards her relations with the saint—for that is practically what it amounts to.

St. Molua leaves a certain monastery because of the annoyance caused him by the women who frequented the monastic school,¹ and the 'Life' of Aed tells us of certain 'holy virgins who were under the care of the holy abbot Cairan.'² In the 'Life' of St. Munnu we have actually recorded the reception of women in the hospitium of a male monastery. This passage is so interesting that I quote it *in extenso*: "When the blessed Munnu had dwelt five years in the district of Eile, there came to him a certain virgin called Emher, with five other virgins, and the attendant of the guest house went to greet her and to receive her into the guest chamber.'³ In the 'Life' of St. Modwenna, an Irish saint who evidently laboured for some time in England, Modwenna builds a monastery and lives in it with her brother and another nun.⁴

This strange association of the sexes in the monastic life evidently survived in Ireland until after the Norman Conquest. This is proved by Roger of Wendover's story of a certain Irish priest who lived about the year 1156. Roger says: 'It happened at that time that a priest, according to his usual custom, going around the cemetery about dawn found a baby

¹ *Vita S. Moluae*, Plummer, V.S.H. vol. ii. p. 214 and footnote.

² *Vita S. Aedi*, V.S.H. vol. i. p. 39.

³ *Vita S. Munnu*, Plummer, V.S.H. vol. ii. p. 230.

⁴ *Vita S. Modwenna*, Capgr. vol. ii. p. 199, ed. Horstmann.

girl laid hard by the cross in the cemetery, whom the priest receiving, moved by a sense of duty entrusted to the care of a nurse, and adopted her as a daughter, and because he designed to make her a nun he made her learn letters.' ¹ This story of a priest having a girl living with him until she reached the age of womanhood, is certainly a striking illustration of that close association of the sexes which, as in Ireland, was characteristic of the Celtic Church in England. The diametrically opposite attitudes in regard to the association of the sexes in the religious life, adopted by the Roman and Celtic Churches, is strikingly illustrated by an instance from Germany, where the two communions came into contact over this very question.

Alto, an Irish missionary, had come to Bavaria about the year 743, and had lived as a hermit in a forest between Munich and Augsburg for about ten years. Pipin granted him a site for a monastery. 'When all was ready, Boniface came for the consecration of the church. In memory of the founder it was called Alto-Munster. The founder showed a more liberal spirit than the consecrator. Boniface wished that all women should be excluded from the convent church, but Alto begged that it might be a parish church open to everyone; the men of the neighbourhood would often be unable to come, but the women would always be at home and could come and pray for the men and for themselves. Boniface agreed, but he would allow no women inside the convent, even to get water from the well. One might have expected that the man who had been a hermit

¹ *Roger of Wendover*, ed. Hewlett, *R.S.* vol. i. p. 14.

would in this matter have been the more rigorous of the two.’¹ But the fact that Alto had led a hermit’s life does not imply that he would favour the exclusion of women from monastic foundations. The priest who adopts a girl who lives with him until womanhood was, as Roger of Wendover tells us, ‘a hermit,’ and he lived ‘in a desert place.’

Not only as regards the association of the sexes in the monastic life was the practice of the Celtic Church contrary to that of the Roman, but it differed in its teaching as regards marriage. The saints of the Celtic Church certainly did not hold the views of Wilfrid, Aldhelm, and Bede on this subject. As regards Columba, we are told, ‘At another time, when the holy man was sojourning as a guest in the island of Rechrea, a certain man of the common people coming to him complained about his wife, who, as he said, having an aversion to him would by no means suffer him to share her couch after marriage. The holy man having heard these things, calling to him the wife, began to reprove her as much as he could, saying, “Wherefore, O woman, do you presume to disown your own flesh? when the Lord has said ‘The two shall be one flesh,’ and so the flesh of your husband is your flesh.”’² This incident, we must remember, is reported by Adamnan, a strong supporter of the Roman Easter, and if he did not approve of the teaching it conveys he most certainly would not have inserted it in his ‘Life.’ Adamnan, too, was a contemporary of Wilfrid’s. One of the miracles

¹ Alfred Plummer, *The Churches in Britain before A.D. 1000*, vol. ii. pp. 59-60.

² Adamnan, *Vita S. Columbae*, Bk. II. Ch. 41.

frequently performed by Celtic saints is the cure of barrenness ;¹ while in the *Book of Leinster* there are two lists, one of the sons of Irish saints, the other of the daughters. 'The author of those lists,' remarks Mr. Olden, 'could not possibly have had any idea that there was any impropriety in saints marrying.'²

What were the views of Wilfrid, Aldhelm, and Bede, who were three of the chief representatives of the party who wished to suppress Celtic usages ? We will take the case of Queen Ethelthrytha, wife of Ecgfrid of Northumbria, because it is a very celebrated one. This queen lived with her husband twelve years and persistently refused him the rights of a husband ; in this she was encouraged by Wilfrid. At last she obtained his consent to a divorce and entered a convent. Bede calls this preserving 'the glory of perfect virginity.'³ Let us see what Aldhelm says on the same subject. He tells us that the conditions of life are not two, virginity and marriage, but three, virginity, chastity in marriage, and the married life, and he compares them to gold, silver, and brass.⁴ Such is the teaching of Aldhelm, Wilfrid, and Bede, diametrically opposed to that of Adamnan and the Celtic Church in general.

The Celtic Church had a married clergy, and we find traces of this custom in England in spite of the attempts to disguise its existence. We find an enactment in the *Penitential*—'If any priest or deacon shall have married a strange wife, let him be publicly

¹ Plummer, V.S.H. Int. vol. i. clvi. note 6.

² *Book of Leinster*, as quoted by Olden, *Church of Ireland*, p. 122.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 19.

⁴ G. F. Browne, *Aldhelm*, pp. 320-321.

degraded.' The use of the words 'shall marry a wife' shows that lawful marriage is intended. This is clearly brought out by the wording of the next section but one: 'If any man has a concubine he ought not to be ordained.'¹ The Acts of the Council of Celchyth, held in 816, contain an enactment evidently aimed against the married clergy. A monastery is forbidden to elect as abbot a man with children. 'Let him not be defiled by homicide or the begetting of children, or even by some serious and public theft; let him have passed his life within the precincts of the monastery, according to the rules.'²

A little more than half a century later we find a most remarkable instance of clerical marriage in Northumbria, this time in connection with the Church of Lindisfarne. On the second advance of the Danes, Bishop Eardulf and the Abbot Eadred took up the body of St. Cuthbert and the relics of the former bishops of the church, and started on their seven years' wanderings. In the first devastation of the monastery under Bishop Higbald almost all the monks were killed; a few, however, escaped and returned to their church. On danger again threatening from the Danes, these few who had survived all left, 'but those amongst them who had been brought up and educated in the clerical way of life from the time of infancy, followed the body of the holy father whithersoever it was borne.'³ Four of these young clerics were the privileged bearers of

¹ Theodore, *Penitential*, H. and S. *Councils*, vol. iii. p. 185.

² *Acts of Council*, Cp. IV. H. and S. vol. iii. p. 581.

³ Symeon Dun., *Hist. Ecc. Dun.* Bk. II. Ch. 6.

the saint's body : no others were allowed to touch the coffin. These were their names—'Hunred, Stitheard, Edmund, Franco, from whose lineage many in the province of Northumbria, not only clergy, but also laity, all the more boast themselves to be descended.'¹ These privileged four, who alone carried Saint Cuthbert's body during its wanderings, were married and in holy orders. Symeon of Durham gives the names and the pedigrees of some of the descendants of the porters of Saint Cuthbert's body. The priest Alchmund, who was descended from a son of Franco's, and three of the great-great-grandsons of Eadred (who are mentioned by name), Hunred's grandson, were alive in Symeon's time.²

Aldwin, Bishop of Durham from 994 to 1023, was a married man.³ Raine remarks : 'There is strong evidence to show that in the north of England during the eleventh century, and even after it, celibacy among the clergy of all ranks and orders was the exception and not the rule. This was opposed, no doubt, to the theory of the Church, but it was the practice in the north, and the pages of Symeon of Durham and Reginald will prove my assertion, especially in the case of the monastery of Durham before it was reformed.'⁴ Durham was the representative of the Celtic foundation of Lindisfarne, and we have here a most interesting survival of Celtic customs.

¹ *Op. cit.* Bk. II. Ch. 12.

² *Vide* S. D., *Hist. Ecc. Dunelm*, R.S. vol. i. p. 80.

³ *De Obsessione Dun.* Ch. 2-3, *Rolls Symeon*, vol. i. pp. 216-217.

⁴ Raine, *Hexham*, vol. i. Int. li.

In Mercia also we find the Celtic custom of a married clergy surviving. In the year 969, 'Edgar the Pacific, King of England, commanded St. Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury, and St. Oswald and Ethelwold, Bishops of Worcester and Winchester, to expel the clerks and settle monks in the larger monasteries of Mercia. Thereupon St. Oswald, in compliance with the king's wishes, expelled from the monastery the clergy of the Church of Worcester who refused to become monks.'¹ But in 975, 'Elfhere, the earldorman of Mercia, and many other nobles, expelled the monks from the monasteries in which they had been settled by Edgar the Pacific, and introduced clerks with their wives.'²

We pass now to the hereditary system so prevalent in Irish monasteries.

In 685 Eanfled and her daughter Elfled ruled the monastery of Whitby; Ethelthrytha was succeeded by her sister Sexburg as Abbess of Ely, and Sexburg was herself succeeded, first at Sheppey and afterwards at Ely, by her daughter Ermengild; and Bede tells us that the Abbess Heriburg of Wetadun designed to make her daughter Quoenburg abbess in her stead.³

Benedict Biscop cautions the monks of Wearmouth against electing an abbot 'according to hereditary descent.'⁴ Evidently he felt there was a danger of the Celtic system of hereditary succession, which he so much disliked, being introduced into the monastery of Wearmouth. Bede's letter to Ecgbert contains evidence of the prevalence of the system of

¹ Flor. Wig. *sub anno* 969.

³ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 3.

² Flor. Wig. *sub anno* 975.

⁴ Bede, *Hist. Abb.* Ch. 11.

hereditary succession in monasteries. In this letter he inveighs against those who take steps to secure the succession to monasteries in their own families.¹ This letter contains a most interesting passage which shows how difficult those who were against Celtic usages found their efforts to eradicate them. Bede advocates the setting up of new bishoprics in existing monasteries ; he anticipates opposition to this, and says : ‘ Lest perchance the abbot or the monks shall try to check and resist this decree, permission should be given them that they themselves may elect from among themselves one who may be ordained a bishop, and who may exercise, together with the monastery itself, the episcopal oversight of as many of the adjacent places as belong to the same diocese.’² This suggestion that the monastery should assist the bishop in his jurisdiction looks like a compromise with the Celtic system, where the abbot had the jurisdiction—and it seems to show how strong was the hold of Celtic monasticism in Northumbria that a writer so attached to Roman usages as Bede should concede such an arrangement. Clearly the task of destroying Celtic ideas was well-nigh hopeless.

We now come to a most interesting series of examples of hereditary succession, which show that this custom persisted in Northumbria until after the Norman Conquest.

¹ Bede, *Ep. ad Ecgbertum*, Ch. 12.

² *Op. cit.* Ch. 10. Plummer remarks : ‘ Here Bede seems to be thinking not merely of the election of the bishop by the monks, which of course was the ordinary rule in all cathedrals of which the constitution was monastic, but of an association of the monastery with the bishop in the exercise of his ecclesiastical jurisdiction.’ *Vide* Plummer, *Bede*, vol. ii. pp. 384-385.

The ecclesiastical requirements of Hexham were attended to 'by a clerical family, who held the church as it would a freehold or leasehold property. The office of priest at Hexham was an hereditary one.'¹ About 1020 Alured Westosune, surnamed Larva, Sacrist of Durham, was priest of Hexham. He had three sons, all priests—Eilaf, also surnamed Larva, treasurer of Durham and priest of Hexham, Hemming, priest of Brancepeth, and Ulkill, priest of Sedgefield, all living in 1085. Eilaf Larva II. had two sons: Eilaf, priest of Hexham, died a monk at Durham in 1138, and Aldred, shrine-keeper at Hexham and a canon there. Eilaf, priest of Hexham, had three sons and a daughter. Aeldred the historian, monk and abbot of Rievaulx, died in 1167, Samuel, Ethelwold, and a daughter, a nun.²

The Church of Bedlington was the hereditary property of Eilaf, one of the seven porters of St. Cuthbert's coffin; in 1085 this family still held the benefice.³

¹ Raine, *Hexham*, vol. i. Int. 1.

² *Vide* Raine's *Hexham*, Int. li.-lii.; also 'An Account of the Early Provosts of Hexham,' from a MS. 'Life' of S. Cuthbert in the possession of Sir Wilfrid Lawson, Bart., of Brough Hall. Raine, vol. i. pp. vii.-viii. Appendix.

³ Raine, vol. i. Int. lv., footnote.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LEGISLATION AGAINST THE CELTIC CHURCH

ONE of the greatest proofs of the survival of Celtic usages in England is the amount of ecclesiastical legislation which it was found necessary to pass against them. This legislation began under Theodore, and we can trace it down to a considerable period after the Norman Conquest. The legislation of Theodore is to be found in two documents—the *Penitential* and the *Decrees of the Council of Hertford*.

The monastic organization of the Celtic Church, which, owing to the absence of diocesan boundaries, resulted in Celtic non-diocesan bishops invading territory under the jurisdiction of bishops in communion with the See of Rome, was for many years a source of great annoyance to the ecclesiastical authorities in England, and a considerable amount of legislation was passed against these wandering clergy. The married clergy, the system of hereditary succession in monasteries, and the mixed monasteries, were all subjects of Theodore's legislation. There are also, as we should expect at this early period, some enactments directed against the

Celtic method of computing Easter, and there are some against the validity of Celtic ordinations.

We will now examine Theodore's legislation on these subjects in order. No less than three Articles of the Council of Hertford appear to be directed against the Celtic non-diocesan bishops and the absence of diocesan boundaries in the Celtic Church. Art. II. enacts "That no bishop intrude himself into the diocese of another, but be satisfied with the government of the people committed to him." Art. IV. forbids monks to move from one monastery to another unless with the consent of their own abbot, but that they continue in the obedience which they promised at the time of their conversion. Art. V. enacts that no clerk forsaking his bishop shall wander about, or be anywhere received without commendatory letters from his diocesan.¹ This would have the effect of completely excluding the Celtic clergy, except such as were under bishops, such as Eata, who had made their submission to Theodore.

Two Articles in the *Penitential* forbid the whole Celtic system of hereditary succession. If an abbot should resign, the brethren *must elect* his successor from their own number, and an abbot is forbidden to ordain one of his relatives to his own post, or to give the post to a stranger or to another abbot *without* the consent of the *brethren*.²

There is an Article in the *Penitential* directed against mixed monasteries. 'It is not permissible for monks to have women in their monasteries, nor for

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 5.

² Theodore, *Pen.* Bk. II. Ch. 6 Articles 1 and 4 in H. and S. vol. iii. pp. 177-203.

nuns similarly to have men.’¹ And then Theodore adds, ‘I do not wish to destroy what is the custom in this country’—a striking confession of inability to uproot these foundations. Theodore’s legislation on this was completely disregarded, and new monasteries of this description continued to be founded. Article IV. Ch. IX. forbids clerical marriages; this also, as we shall see, was disregarded until after the Norman Conquest.²

Two Articles in the *Penitential* are directed against the Celtic Easter. ‘If anyone does not accept the Nicene Council, and celebrates Easter with the Jews on the fourteenth day, he is to be entirely excluded from the Church unless he repents before his death,’ and if any person joins in prayer with such a one he is required to do penance.³

The *Penitential* declares all those ordained by Scotch or British bishops who do not conform to the Catholic practice about Easter and the tonsure to be out of communion with the Church, and orders that they shall ‘be confirmed by a fresh imposition of hands by a Catholic bishop.’ Churches consecrated by such bishops are to be asperged and reconfirmed, and priests under Theodore’s jurisdiction are forbidden to give chrism or the Eucharist to those in communion with them.⁴

The *Dialogue* of Ecgbert, Archbishop of York, forbids wandering priests to administer the sacraments unless they bring with them the letters commendatory.⁵

¹ *Op. cit.* Article 8.

² On this see also Chapter XIII. *supra*.

³ Theodore, *Penitential*, Bk. I. Ch. 5, Articles 3 and 4.

⁴ *Op. cit.* Bk. II. Ch. 9, Articles 1 and 3.

⁵ H. and S. vol. iii. p. 407.

The Council of Celchyth in 816 passed several enactments against Celtic usages. Cap. IV. evidently forbids a married priest being elected abbot of a monastery. Cap. V. enacts 'That no one of Irish race be allowed to exercise the sacred ministry in anyone's diocese . . . because it is uncertain to us, by whom, or whether indeed by anybody, they were ordained. We know in what manner it is laid down in the canons, that no bishop or priest shall attempt to enter upon the diocese of another without the permission of the bishop concerned.'¹ The drastic nature of this legislation, which absolutely forbids any Irishman from exercising ministerial functions in England, shows how much trouble the Celtic clergy were giving the English ecclesiastical authorities, and at the end of this enactment we find again the prohibition of clergy invading other dioceses without permission; this, coming immediately after the prohibition of Irishmen officiating in England, shows how hard it was to eradicate Celtic usages.

We come down to the close of the tenth century. In the year 997 a Council was held at Calne, for what purpose William of Malmesbury tells us. After the death of Edgar, the secular canons who had been expelled from their monasteries 'rekindled the former feuds, alleging that it was a great and serious disgrace for newcomers to drive the ancient inmates from their dwellings.' . . . 'Hence they began to clamour and rage, and hastened to Dunstan, the principal people, as is the custom of the laity, exclaiming more especially that the injury which the canons had wrongfully suffered ought to be redressed

¹ *Acts of Council*, H. and S. vol. iii. pp. 579-584.

by gentler measures.' . . . ' Moreover, one of them, Elferius, with more than common audacity, had even overturned almost all the monasteries which that highly-revered monk, Ethelwold, Bishop of Winchester, had built throughout Mercia. On this account, a full Synod being convened, they first assembled at Winchester. . . . But *men's minds being not yet at rest upon the subject*, a Council was called at Calne.' ¹

Interesting light is thrown on this Council by the information Eadmer gives us, that the party who favoured the married clerks sent to the land of the Scots (Scotiam miserunt) and brought to Calne a most famous and eloquent man to defend their cause.²

In 1108 a Synod held in London passed several enactments against the married clergy. Among other things, it was declared that 'Those priests, deacons, or sub-deacons, who, after the prohibition of the Synod of London, have retained their wives, or taken others, if they choose to continue celebrating Mass, are to so put them away that neither the women are to come to their houses, nor they to the houses of the women.'³ 'Whosoever shall wilfully and contumaciously retain his wife, and yet presume to perform Mass, shall be summoned to answer, and on his neglect to appear for eight days shall be excommunicated. Priests who choose to live with their wives are to be deprived of all ecclesiastical preferment, and are declared infamous.'⁴

¹ W M., *Gesta Regum*, Bk. II. Ch. 161, R.S. vol. i.

² Eadmer, *Vita Dun.*; *vide* also p. 178 (footnote) *supra*.

³ Flor. Wig. *sub anno* 1108.

⁴ *Op. cit.*

These enactments cannot have had the desired effect, for again in 1125 another Synod, held in London,¹ legislates on the same subject. Yet again, in 1127, at a Synod held at Westminster, we find the same legislation repeated.²

In 1138 a Synod was held at Westminster. The Continuation of the Chronicle of Florence of Worcester tells us that it was presided over by a papal legate, Alberic, Bishop of Ostia. It published sixteen canons. These canons have been preserved for us by Prior Richard of Hexham ; one of them forbids marriage to the clergy.³

In 1102, 1108, 1125, 1127, and 1138, it was found necessary to pass legislation forbidding clerical marriages. Truly those Celtic customs implanted in England by Aidan and his successors were hard to eradicate.

¹ Cont. Flor. Wig. *sub anno* 1125.

² *Op. cit.*, *sub anno* 1127.

³ *Ric. Hagust*, Surtees Society, vol. i. p. 102.

CHAPTER XV

ENGLISHMEN IN IRELAND—IRISHMEN IN ENGLAND—ART AND ARCHITECTURE

It will be well at the beginning of this chapter to give a short account of the position occupied by Ireland as regards learning and culture, as compared with England and Rome during the period between the Synod of Whitby and the Danish invasions.

‘Ireland was at this time the great centre of Christian learning in Western Europe’;¹ her great monastic schools gave an education which during this period could be obtained nowhere else. Bangor, Lismore, Clonmacnoise, not to mention several others, were at their height. We need not wonder at Irish influence in England when we realize the position occupied by that country during this period, and when we find so large a proportion of men who loom large during these centuries, either born or educated in Ireland, or by teachers under Irish influence. The evidence of Aldhelm, who wrote early in the eighth century, is instructive. In a letter to Eadfrid, Bishop of Lindisfarne,² who had studied six years in Ireland, he says that the numbers of

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. i. p. 321.

² *Op. Ald.* ed. Giles, 91-95.

those who resorted thither from England resembled a flock of bees, and he is rather upset that Englishmen should have to resort to Ireland for educational purposes.

The Irish Church received these students from other lands with open doors ; the wonderful hospitality of that Church at this time to foreign students is described by Bede in a well-known passage. He says : ' The Scots willingly received them all, and took care to supply them with daily food without cost, as also to furnish them with books for their studies, and teaching free of charge.'¹

The Litany of Aengus the Culdee gives us some idea of the number of foreigners who flocked to Ireland. In it we find many names not only from Britain, but also Germans, and even Egyptians, and mention is made of seven Egyptian monks who are buried in one place ;² one of the divisions of the city of Armagh was called Trian-Saxon, the Saxon's third, from the number of English students who inhabited it ; and in the eighth century we know that certain streets of the town of Kilbally, near Rahan in King's County, were occupied entirely by foreigners.³

What was the education then given in Ireland which attracted such crowds of students to her shores ? As regards the study of Greek, we know that the Irish monks speedily availed themselves of the opportunity of studying that language, when the Arabs overwhelmed Egypt and Palestine in the

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. III. Ch. 27.

² Graves, *Proc. R.I.A.* 1884, p. 280.

³ O'Curry, *MS. Materials*, p. 379.

seventh century, and caused a migration of Eastern monks to the West.¹

Mr. Haddan, writing of Columbanus and other Irish saints of his time, says: 'Familiarity with Latin classics, as well as with the fathers both Greek and Latin, shows itself in all the Scottish (Irish) writers'²—and the seven Egyptian monks above mentioned, shows the connection which existed between Ireland and Egypt. In the Irish missions which Christianised Scotland and England, and which played such a large part in the conversion of the barbarian hordes who had occupied the Western Roman Empire, 'there was a real passion for culture, both in art and letters,'³ and thus Irish culture and art penetrated almost every corner of Western Europe.

Howarth has pointed out that 'in Ireland there was a special fervour for studying Greek at this time, unmatched in Europe, and virtually unknown in Gaul,'⁴ the only other place where Greek was studied to any great extent being in Hadrian's monastery at Canterbury, so that the great Irish schools had little, if anything, to learn from Canterbury even as regards the teaching of Greek, and we may well believe that Aldhelm had acquired a knowledge of that language long before he repaired to Canterbury.

Hebrew was known in Ireland: Camin of Inniskeltra wrote a commentary on the Psalms collated with the Hebrew text.⁵

¹ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. i. xxvi.-xxvii.

² Haddan, *Remains*, p. 275.

³ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. i. xxvi.-xxvii.

⁴ *Op. cit.* vol. iii. p. 315.

⁵ Lanigan, *Ecc. Hist.* iii. p. 11.

In the old Irish Commentary on St. Paul's Epistles preserved at Wurzburg, the glosses of which, according to Zeuss, are of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century,¹ the theology of the East as well as of the West is represented, and Jerome, Augustine, Origen, and Gregory the Great, are all quoted. The 'Geography' of Mac Cosse, used in the school of Rosscarbery, Co. Cork, in the tenth century, gives us some idea of what was taught on this subject in the Irish schools. It is quite astonishing to find that the compilers of this geography knew of the existence of petroleum,² and that the existence of the

'Land of Alaunia, where is a burning fire
From the Caspian Sea to the Palus Meotus (Azoff)'

was taught to the students at Rosscarbery. There is quite a long description of India in this ancient text-book, the river Indus, the Hindu Coosh mountains, and even the elephants of the country being mentioned.³

The influence of Irish Christianity on the education, art, and culture of England was supreme for fifty years and more after the Synod of Whitby.

What was the influence of Canterbury in England as regards education and culture during this period? The position of Canterbury at this time has been admirably summed up by Howarth. He says: 'Augustine's monks were Gregory's spiritual children; what they knew Gregory had taught them, his ideals were theirs, and they proved unwelcome and un-

¹ Zeuss, *Grammatica Celtica*, as quoted by Olden, p. 160.

² Olden, *Church of Ireland*, p. 165.

³ 'The Geography of Ross Ailithir,' with trans. by Olden, *Proc. R.I.A.* No. xxxvii.

attractive. He had deliberately set his face against all learning, and all culture and taste, as inconsistent with the ascetic life of men who had no other business in this life than to prepare their souls for heaven, and they did the same';¹ and in another place the same writer remarks: 'There has been too much exaggeration about the schools supposed to have been introduced by Augustine and his monks. We have no right to suppose that they had any other ideals than their master Gregory, and he, we know, despised secular learning and entirely disapproved of the clergy teaching it.' Howarth then notices 'the astounding fact that, with all his opportunities, the great Pope should never have taken the trouble to learn Greek, in which the best thought of the Old World was enshrined, and in which nearly all the theology of the earlier centuries of the Church was written.'²

Until the time of Theodore, therefore, Canterbury could offer nothing educationally, and then the school of Canterbury was only one against the numerous and celebrated Irish schools, and English schools taught by Irish teachers, and those trained by them and in close communication with Ireland.

What was the position of Rome as regards learning and culture? We cannot do better than give it in the words of Gregorovius. He says: 'The learning of the Roman clergy had undoubtedly long been put to shame by foreigners, and the monks of distant England and Ireland might in their turn have

¹ Howarth, Preface xxiv.

² Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. iii. p. 359. Also the same writer's *Gregory the Great*, p. 117.

instructed Rome, out of whose cloisters their own monasteries had only a short time before been called into existence. After the time of Gregory the Great, not a single scholar remained who could have ventured to hold a learned discourse with a Bede or an Alcuin, with Aldhelm and Theodulf of Orleans, with an Isodore or Paul Diaconus. . . . The monks in the Roman cloisters did not attempt to compete in learning with their brethren of Bobbio or Monte Cassino. . . . Music flourished in Rome under the patronage of St. Cecilia, but the Muse of poetry had been hushed. Knowledge of the profane poets and orators, which was partially revived in the eleventh century, had disappeared after the fall of the Gothic kingdom . . . and . . . when on the death of the English Caedwalla it was desired to frame an epitaph in his honour, no Roman of ability equal to the task was apparently forthcoming, and the inscription had therefore to be entrusted to Benedict Crispus.' ¹

Such being the position in Ireland, it is not strange that we should find Irish teachers in England and numerous English students in Ireland long after the Synod of Whitby.

First let us see what names we can trace in English documents of Irishmen in England after the year 664.

Coldingham was a celebrated mixed monastery. In this monastery, Bede tells us, there lived a man of the Scottish race called Adamnan. It is to this monk, who leads 'a life entirely devoted to God in continence and prayer,' that the vision of the impending destruction of Coldingham is granted. In

¹ Gregorovius, *History of Rome during the Middle Ages*, English translation, vol. iii. pp. 408-417.

the same chapter Bede tells us that in his youth Adamnan had been guilty of some crime which weighed on his conscience; so 'He betook himself to a certain bishop (*sacerdos*)¹ and received from him his penance. Having prescribed the measure of his penance, the bishop went away, and upon some sudden occasion passed over to Ireland, which was his native country, where he died.'² This is in all probability an instance of a Celtic non-diocesan bishop working in England.

The poem of Ethelwulf—*De Abbatibus*—gives us some most interesting particulars of Irishmen in an English monastery. One of the famous men in this monastery was Ultan, an Irishman, an illuminator of books, and also a most zealous teacher.³ We read in this poem that in this same monastery there was a smith, a very holy man, called Cuicuín, evidently another Irishman.⁴

So here in this English monastery we have the teacher, the illuminator of books, the metal-worker—Irishmen; and since the monastery in the poem (wherever it was) was founded in the reign of Osred, these Irish teachers were working in England more than forty years after the Synod of Whitby. To these three arts for which Ireland was famous—teaching, illumination, and metal-work—we can add a fourth—sculptured stonework. In the year 1789 a most interesting sculptured stone was found in the

¹ *Sacerdos* nearly always means *bishop* at this period. I have only found one instance in Bede where it must be translated *priest*. (Bk. V. Ch. 6.) It seems therefore that *bishop* is the meaning here, especially when we consider the case of Boisil, to be dealt with later.

² Bede, *H.E.* Bk. IV. Ch. 25.

³ *Carmen Ædelwulf*, Cap. 8, *Rolls Symeon*, vol. i.

⁴ *Op. cit.* Cap. 10.

ruins of St. Woden's Church at Alnmouth in Northumberland. The inscription on this stone is : 'The grave of Eadulf : Myredah wrought me : Hludwig made me '—the former probably being the mason and sculptor, the latter the letterer.¹ Here again, at the beginning of the eighth century, we have an Irishman, a sculptor, Muiredach by name, working in England.

We will now notice some distinguished Englishmen who received their education at Irish hands. Oswald, King of Northumbria, his brother Eanfrid, King of the Bernicians, Oswy and his son Alchfrid, were all educated and baptized by the Irish. The exile of Oswald, Oswy, and Eanfrid lasted seventeen years ; many of the youth of the nobility had been banished with them, and ' they almost certainly spent a part of this time, as Zimmer has argued, in Ireland : and travelling to and fro there, they doubtless became well acquainted with the ways of the Irish as well as with their language.' ²

Aldfrid, King of Northumbria, had lived for many years in Ireland. He had an Irish mother named Fina, and he himself went in that country by the name of Fland Fiona.³ Aldfrid was a most accomplished scholar and patron of letters. Aldhelm dedicated to him his work on metres. Aldfrid was himself a poet and wrote Irish verse with facility, and a poem of his in praise of Ireland has come down to us.⁴

¹ G. F. Browne, *Theodore and Wilfrith*, p. 288. Bishop Browne has with great probability identified this stone as the memorial of the usurper Eadulf, who seized the throne of Northumbria on Aldfrid's death.

² Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. i. pp. 5-6. ³ Reeves, *Adamnan*, p. 185.

⁴ Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. pp. 149-157.

Ceolwulf, to whom Bede dedicated the *Historia Ecclesiastica*, was evidently another Northumbrian king with an Irish education, since he, like Aldfrid, has an Irish name—‘Echaid.’

Perhaps the greatest proof of how impossible it was for even those who favoured Roman usages in England to do without Irish teachers, if they wanted the best education possible in those days, is given by the number of Englishmen who held views opposed to those of the Celtic Church, but who were compelled to seek their education at the hands of those whose customs they were endeavouring to abolish. A few examples will be of interest. Aldhelm was strongly opposed to Englishmen going to Ireland for their education, and yet he evidently was unable to prevent his own pupils going there. There is a letter extant from Ethelwald, a pupil of Aldhelm’s, in which he tells him of a projected visit beyond the sea with another of his pupils, and sends him a poem containing an account of his journey.¹ ‘These two pupils of Aldhelm were doubtless on their way to Ireland, for Ethelwald speaks in his letter of their voyage over the seas.’²

One of the most remarkable proofs of the absolute necessity of an Irish education is given us by the fact that the English missionaries to Friesland were educated in Ireland and sent out from that country. An Englishman named Ecgbert, who had lived for many years in Ireland, conceived the idea of going as a missionary to Friesland. The ship in which he and his companions embark is lost, however, but they

¹ Giles, *Op. Ald.* 101-102.

² Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. ii. p. 458.

are saved ; Ecgbert takes this as a Divine intimation that he is to give up the work. One of his companions, however, Wictbert, '*notable for his contempt of this world and for his learning and knowledge, for he had lived many years the life of an anchorite in great perfection while a stranger in Ireland,*'¹ goes to Friesland and preaches to the heathen inhabitants for two years without result ; he therefore returns to Ireland. Ecgbert, however, still perseveres in his determination to send missionaries to the heathen Friesians from his base in Ireland. Twelve ' holy and industrious men ' are sent by Ecgbert to again attempt to evangelize the Friesians. Pippin, Duke of the Franks, had lately conquered part of Friesland and expelled the king, Rathbed ; Ecgbert's twelve missionaries from Ireland turned aside to Pippin, who sent them to preach in Friesland, ' supporting them at the same time with his sovereign authority that none might molest them in their preaching.'² Next we read that two other priests of the English nation, the two Hewalds, who had *long lived as strangers in Ireland*, went as missionaries into the province of the Old Saxons.³ The most celebrated of Ecgbert's missionaries—one of the twelve sent to Friesland—was the great missionary Willibrord. Ecgbert was a Celtic bishop, as we shall see later, and he was an English one ; he conceived the idea of using the educational advantages of Ireland in order to train missionaries, and he evidently ordained these missionaries to the priesthood before sending them out from Ireland.

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 9.

² *Op. cit.* Bk. V. Ch. 10.

³ *Op. cit.* Bk. V. Ch. 10.

'About 692 (when Willibrord saw his way to establishing a permanent mission) . . . he went to Rome to consult Pope Sergius and obtain his approval of what was being done. And it was about the same time that Suidbert, another of the twelve missionaries, went to Britain to be consecrated bishop.'¹ He was consecrated by Wilfrid, who was then exercising episcopal duties in Mercia.

Let us now return to Ecgbert. It is practically certain that he was a bishop. Alcuin, in his prose 'Life' of Willibrord, calls Ecgbert 'episcopus,' so does Ethelwerd in his Chronicle, and Ethelwulf in his poem *De Abbatibus*. The 'Life' of St. Adalbert does the same; moreover, he is called 'Ichtbricht biscop'—'Ecgbert bishop'—in an Irish document containing an account of a Synod at Birra (Parsonstown) in which the so-called 'Cáin Adomnáin' (Law of Adamnan) was promulgated. Of this document there is a copy in MS. Rawl. B. 512 f., 48 ff. Ecgbert's name occurs on f. 49 d. 'Of the ecclesiastics attending this Synod I have identified,' says Plummer, 'about a dozen. Their obits in the F.M. range from 696-785. The Synod cannot be later than the former year, at which time Ecgbert was in Ireland. . . . It illustrates the nature of Irish episcopacy that with few exceptions the abbots in this document take precedence of the bishops.'²

Some interesting conclusions follow from this fact that Ecgbert was a bishop. He was of course, although an Englishman, a bishop in communion

¹ Alfred Plummer, *Churches in Britain before A.D. 1000*, vol. ii. pp. 24-25.

² Plummer, *Bede*, vol. ii. p. 285. All this evidence is given by Plummer.

with the Celtic Church, and therefore if not actually treated as completely outside the fold of the Church, at any rate looked on with extreme disfavour by the Roman ecclesiastical authorities.

Ecgbert made Ireland the base for training his missionaries, taking advantage of the educational system afforded by that country; but Suidbert, although educated in Ireland and evidently ordained there by Ecgbert, came to England to Wilfrid for consecration. He passed by the country from whose shores he had been sent on his mission, and the bishop who had given him his commission: neither of them were acceptable to the Roman authorities, to whose authority Ecgbert's missionaries had yielded their submission.

It is certainly a most striking illustration of the strength of Celtic usages in England, and of how absolutely necessary Irish education still was, that Ecgbert, who brought the monks of Iona to the Roman Easter, and who is so greatly praised for this by Bede, was an English Celtic bishop.¹

Before we leave this subject I would draw attention to an interesting instance of Celtic discipline in England from the pages of Bede.

Boisil, Provost of Melrose, Cuthbert's old master, with whom Ecgbert was so closely associated, was a bishop. This is proved by a passage in Bede's prose 'Life of Cuthbert.' In Chap. IV. of this 'Life,' Eata, then Abbot of Melrose and afterwards bishop of the same church, and Boisil, provost of the same monastery, are both mentioned. Eata, the abbot, is called 'presbyter,' but Boisil is styled 'sacerdos.' He

¹ Vide 'Additional Note on Ecgbert and Agilbert,' p. 222, *infra*.

was, of course, under Eata's jurisdiction although a bishop.

Before I bring this chapter to a close, a few instances of the survival of Celtic art and architecture must be noticed.

The Gospels of Lindisfarne, written in the eighth century by Englishmen trained in Irish art, is a striking illustration of how Celtic art was still cultivated in Northumbria in spite of all efforts to suppress it. There are two instances in Bede's works of churches which were evidently placed within the enclosure of a rath. John of Beverley used to retire to an oratory not far from Hexham, especially during Lent. This oratory was 'surrounded by a sparse grove and by a rampart,'¹ and Howarth has noticed that Cuthbert's dwelling on Farne island 'was apparently a rath . . . nearly circular, about four perches from wall to wall.'² Two interesting illustrations of the adoption of Celtic methods by Englishmen, and that after the year 664.

¹ Bede, *H.E.* Bk. V. Ch. 2. ² Howarth, *Golden Age*, vol. iii. p. 24.

CHAPTER XVI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

FROM the foregoing pages it will be seen how deep and widespread was the influence of Celtic Christianity in England, and how long and difficult was the task of suppressing Celtic customs in that country.

The Synod of Whitby was a Synod of the kingdom of Northumbria: no other part of England was represented at it; but even in Northumbria the observance of the Celtic Easter lingered on at Lindisfarne, and possibly at Whitby, for some years longer, until Eata's consecration by Theodore brought that church into line with the rest of Christendom in that respect. The coming of Theodore to Canterbury greatly increased the influence of the See of Canterbury in England—that See, whose influence outside the kingdom of Kent had before been infinitesimal, now made its authority felt over the whole of the English-speaking districts of Britain.

During the first fifteen years of his episcopate Theodore by his wise and tactful administration made great progress towards conciliating and bringing into line those who favoured Celtic customs in

England. How strong was the opposition he had to overcome, and how wisely he overcame it, we have seen in the foregoing pages. During Theodore's episcopate efforts were made to bring into the Roman fold the Celtic populations surrounding Anglian territory, and some of them subject to the imperium of English kings, but Theodore's work was to a great extent undone by the events of 685 and the following years.

After 685 North and South went on their own ways ecclesiastically. A strong Celtic reaction followed the accession of Aldfrid to the throne of Northumbria; the attempted suppression of Celtic customs was most unpopular, and with a king of Irish sympathies, and bishops educated under Celtic influence in all the Northumbrian Sees, during the greater part of his reign those who favoured Celtic customs had it all their own way.

Canterbury had ceased to be an influence in Northumbria. Theodore, however, during the first fifteen years of his occupancy of that See had made great progress in bringing the Celtic Church in England under his authority; he had secured the universal observance of the Roman Easter, he had obtained the submission of the most powerful ecclesiastic in the north, the Abbot of Lindisfarne—and he had obtained that by his tactful and conciliatory policy.

As has been pointed out in these pages, the Roman party were handicapped by want of proper educational facilities; men who were educated in Ireland could not be expected to support the abolition of Celtic practices.

The first step to remedy this condition of affairs was taken when Wearmouth and Jarrow were founded, and although these great foundations could not hope to excel the great Irish schools in learning, yet they made it possible to receive a good education in England. This was a great step towards undermining Celtic influence, since it produced a clergy who were educated from their youth quite apart from those who favoured the customs of the Celtic Church.

During the Celtic reaction of Aldfrid's reign these monasteries safely guarded Roman ideas until the time came when they could extend their influence.

The last struggle of the Celtic party in Northumbria seems to have taken place just about the time Bede wrote his *History*. It ended in victory for those who favoured Rome, and in the appointment of a bishop to York, the first to occupy that See (if we except Wilfrid) who was in sympathy with Roman influence.

Egbert's appointment to York, and the reception by him of the pallium, meant the direct connection of Northumbria with Rome, it meant an increased dignity to the Bishop of York, who was independent of any control from Canterbury, and it meant that the kingdom of Northumbria was not under the authority of a bishop in another English kingdom. Thus the power of Rome was established, and the dignity of the Bishop of York and the King of Northumbria did not suffer.

Both the north and south of England were brought into closer contact with Rome, through the Empire of Charlemagne, by means of English missionaries like Alcuin. The number of letters addressed by

Alcuin to eminent Englishmen, and the letters of Charles himself to English kings, show how real this connection was.

In spite, however, of this, Celtic customs lingered on until the Norman Conquest ; the Danish invasion destroyed the mixed monasteries, but the hereditary succession and the married clergy were only suppressed by the strong hands of the Norman conquerors.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON ECGBERT AND AGILBERT

Vide CHS. XII. AND XV.

THE sending of Suidbert to Wilfrid for consecration, and not to Ecgbert, who was in episcopal orders and who had given Suidbert his commission, raises a difficult question.

What was the exact position of the Celtic bishops as regards the See of Rome ?

Ecgbert and Agilbert, the successor of Birinus, were both educated in Ireland and they were both bishops. As regards Ecgbert, it is practically certain that he was in episcopal orders, and there is much to be said in favour of the view that Agilbert, who was already a bishop on his arrival in England, had received consecration in Ireland—in other words, both he and Ecgbert were Celtic bishops.

Agilbert was a wandering bishop, apparently consecrated without a diocese, and we are told that he had spent several years in Ireland. Ecgbert was a supporter of the Roman Easter : it was through his efforts that Iona gave up the Celtic practice. Agilbert was also a supporter of the Roman Easter ; both were educated and spent years in Ireland ; both were bishops without dioceses, a peculiarly Celtic usage ; Ecgbert was consecrated in Ireland—why should not Agilbert have been the same ? A wandering bishop suddenly appears in Wessex—he comes from Ireland ; if we knew nothing more about him we should at once say that he was a Celtic non-diocesan bishop.

There are, however, difficulties to be faced. Bright suggests that Agilbert was consecrated in Gaul as a 'vacant bishop,' three of whom signed the decrees of the Council of Maçon in 585. (Bright, *Chapters of Early English Church History*, p. 183, note 3, quoting Mansi, iv. 959.) But it was certainly contrary to the practice of the whole Western Church (with the single exception of the Celtic Church) to consecrate a bishop without a see, or, if consecrated as a missionary bishop, to some fixed sphere of labour.

Augustine was consecrated missionary bishop for the English at the bidding of Gregory : even the story of Birinus' commission as a missionary bishop from the See of Rome gives him a specified sphere of labour. This shows that those who invented the story saw the need of giving Birinus some fixed sphere in which to exercise episcopal functions. The case of the three bishops who signed the decrees of the Council of Maçon must have been very exceptional, and it is much safer to rely on the universal practice of the Church from which Agilbert had just come, than on the evidence of an exceptional case which was quite contrary to the practice of the Church everywhere, with the single exception of the Celtic Church.

Let us now face the difficulties. Agilbert ordained Wilfrid to the priesthood ; he was present on the Roman side at the Synod of Whitby, and he afterwards became Bishop of Paris. It will be argued that inasmuch as the Church of Rome treated all Irish bishops as excommunicate, Agilbert cannot have been in Celtic orders. The question, however, is far more difficult than it appears. The case of Ecgbert helps us to clear up the difficulties.

Ecgbert was also a supporter of the Roman Easter, and he surely had deserved well of those who favoured Roman usages ; he was undoubtedly in Celtic orders, and evidently ordained the missionaries he sent out to Germany. Irish clergy were undoubtedly treated as excommunicate by the Church of Rome at the beginning of the ninth century (*vide Canons of Council of Clovesho*, Cap. V., H. and S. vol. iii.

p. 581), when the sweeping enactment was passed that no Irishman should be permitted to administer the sacraments, and all persons were forbidden to receive them at the hands of persons of Irish race. Was the position of *all* the Celtic clergy the same a century before? I feel inclined to think not, and that the Roman Church made some sort of difference between those who kept the Roman Easter and tonsure and those who adhered to the Celtic usages as regards them. Let us examine the evidence.

Ceadda was re-consecrated by Theodore. (What exactly happened is not certain: the words used are 'consummated his ordination anew'—'ordinationem eius denuo catholica ratione consummavit'). What is certain, however, is that at Ceadda's consecration two Celtic bishops who kept the Celtic Easter had assisted. So also, according to Eddius, Wilfrid's great complaint about the Celtic bishops is that they do not keep the correct Easter, and even Eddius does not call them 'heretics': he puts the word 'schismatics' into Wilfrid's mouth.

Theodore's *Penitential* has a chapter dealing with the subject of Scotch and British bishops. It is headed 'Concerning Communion with Irish and Britons who are not Catholic as regards Easter and the tonsure,' and the first section runs as follows: 'Whoso have been ordained by the bishops of the Scots, or Britons, who are not Catholic as regards Easter and the tonsure, are not deemed to be in communion with the Church, but must be confirmed by a fresh laying on of hands by a Catholic bishop.' (Bk. II. C. 9. Art. I.) Howarth has translated this 'Those who are ordained by Scotch or British bishops *and* who do not conform . . .' (*Golden Age*, vol. iii. 255); but it should be observed that putting in the word 'and,' which is not in the Latin text, completely alters the meaning. Howarth's translation excommunicates all British and Irish bishops. It seems to me, however, that only those who do not observe the Roman Easter and the tonsure are meant, and that it was only later that excommunication was pronounced against *all* Scottish clergy.

The Church of Rome knew very little of the Scotie and British Churches, especially in the early period: she did know that they kept Easter according to the old reckoning and that they had a different tonsure, therefore she excommunicated them for this. When, later, the Irish Church accepted the Roman method, other differences had been discovered, and the excommunication was then extended to all Irishmen in England, largely, no doubt, for the reason as stated by the Council of Clovesho—‘because it is uncertain by whom, and whether by anyone, they were ordained.’ (‘Qui incertum est nobis, unde, an ab aliquo ordinantur.’) The Celtic system of non-diocesan bishops caused clergy to invade other dioceses without letters commendatory. If this argument is true, then the cases of Agilbert and Ecgbert are both explained. Agilbert was in Celtic orders, but adhered to the Roman usage as regards Easter and the tonsure, therefore he was not treated *at that period* as outside the pale of the Church although in Celtic orders. Ecgbert lived at a later period, when antagonism between the two communions was running very high, although the Easter question was largely a thing of the past. Ecgbert kept the correct Easter, but Suidbert had to go for consecration to England. The Celtic Church had largely accepted the Roman Easter, yet the excommunication had been extended to all in communion with the Celtic Church (as we see was the case in 816). Rome would never have permitted Suidbert to receive consecration in Ireland.

The whole question is full of difficulty, but the above explanation seems at least not in conflict with the available evidence.

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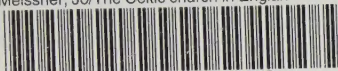
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